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conduct during the year ending*

December 31st, 1901







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THE VANISHED YACHT.







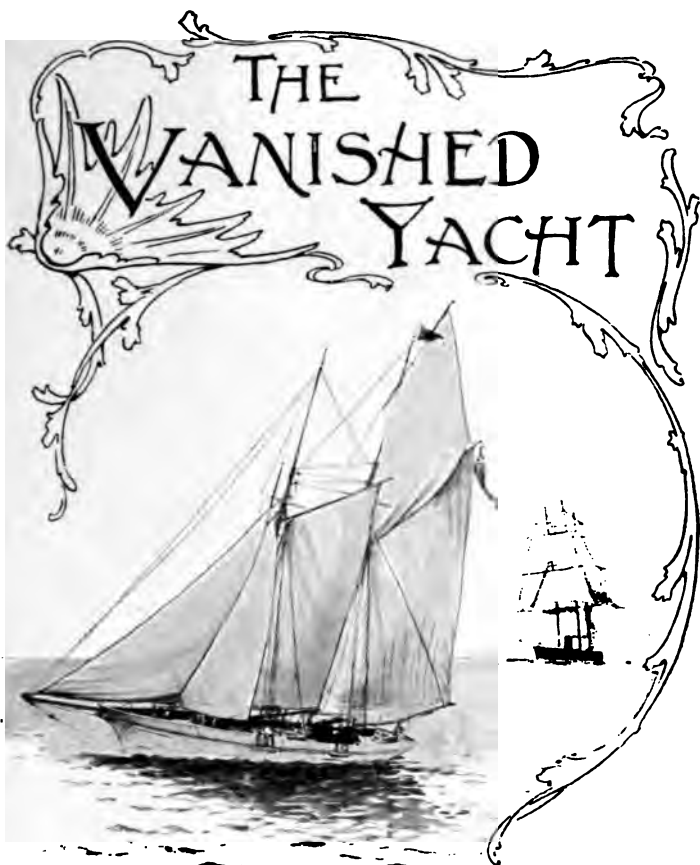
"Draw his knife out of the sheath," cried Ralph."



THE "DAPHNE."

T. NELSON & SONS
EDINBURGH





THE "DAPHNE."

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EDINBURGH



THE
VANISHED YACHT

BY

E. HARCOURT BURRAGE

AUTHOR OF "GERARD MASTYN," "THE SLAVE-RAIDERS OF ZANZIBAR,"

"WHITHER BOUND,"

ETC. ETC.



THOMAS NELSON AND SONS

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THE VANISHED YACHT.

CHAPTER I.

A STORMY NIGHT.

THE wind swept by with a roaring sound, and heavy rain swished against the windows of a house in Little Crampton, facing the sea. It was night, the season autumn, and very few people were abroad. There was very little in the way of amusement in the quiet seaside place to tempt the inhabitants or visitors to leave their homes.

For three days the equinoctial gales had been raging, arriving earlier than usual, to the intense annoyance of Ralph Brooking and Lyon Lyster, the owners of two yachts, respectively named the *Daphne* and the *Iris*. These two troubled gentlemen sat in the house above referred to, brooding over the arrival of the untoward storm.

They had just dined well, in spite of their perturbed feelings, for they were young, on the bright

side of twenty-five, and blessed with abounding health. Some comfort had been obtained from the partaking of an excellent dinner, but their brows were bent as a terrific gust of wind set the windows rattling like big castanets. Ralph got up from the table, and crossing the room, turned aside the window blind.

"Bar the lamps," he said, "flickering and fluttering thanks to the wind, it is as dark as the bottom of the Mammoth Cave. I can see neither the harbour nor the yacht lights. I hope they have been attended to. A fisherman's boat blundering into port might easily run against a craft at anchor."

Lyon Lyster lit a cigar and forced a smile, a poor imitation of what he would have shown in his happier moments. His friend dropped the blind and resumed his seat. Both were silent for a while, and Ralph followed the example of Lyon by filling and lighting a briar pipe.

"It was for Carrie's sake that I thought of the trip up the Mediterranean," said Lyon presently. "I don't think for a moment that there is anything very serious the matter with her. All she wants is a change to a warmer climate for a few months. Bertie too was anxious to see a little of the world; and as you were willing to accompany us in the *Daphne*, making a double trip of it, all promised so well; and now we get these bothering gales. We ought to have started a week ago."

"It is my fault," said Ralph; "I listened to Santioff, who made so many objections to the old men that I arranged for the fresh crew. Everything else is ready, and I ought to have retained my old men, as the right fellows have been difficult to get—so Santioff says."

"You trust a great deal to Santioff."

"Too much, you think?"

"Well, he is a Spaniard, and I am not fond of the race."

"He has been all over the world," said Ralph, "and is a thorough seaman. I can't help looking upon him as a modern Columbus; he has discovered so many places where the ordinary navigator has never been."

"So he says," rejoined Lyon dubiously.

Ralph smiled, as if he understood Lyon's doubt of the Spaniard. It was, in his opinion, a matter of mutual dislike, an instinctive feeling which to him was unaccountable.

"You will understand Santioff better by-and-by," he said. "The man is reserved, and there is a lot of the old Spanish Don in his manner; but he is, as you are, Ly, a thorough good fellow in the main. He assured me to-day that he believed he had the right crew in tow at last, and if the weather breaks to-morrow, we can be off and away over the ever restless sea."

A slight tap upon the door heralded the entry of the landlady to announce the arrival of one "Blower,"

who was at the door below and wished to speak to Mr. Brooking, "very particular."

Blower was one of those men who in river districts are known as "waterside characters." They have much to do with the rivers, but seldom go on them, confining their labours to assisting votaries of the aquatic sport in getting in and out the boats. He performed a similar office at Little Crampton for the venturesome youths and maidens who went down to the sea in rowing vessels, obtainable on payment at the rate of a shilling per hour.

Blower was well known to both the yachtsmen, for he was not the man to put his light under a bushel, or to throw away a chance of "making himself agreeable and useful to the gentlemen;" but why he should present himself at Ralph Brooking's temporary place of residence at that hour, and on such a night, was incomprehensible.

"Ask him what he wants, Mrs. Cox, will you, please?" said Ralph.

"I have asked him," replied the landlady, bridling a little, "but he said he had something to say that wasn't to be sent in second hand. Like all them loafers, he's got more than his share of impudence."

"See him," said Lyon indifferently; "probably he hasn't picked up a sixpence for three days and finds himself stranded. Putting aside a penny for a rainy day is not one of the virtues of Blower."

Ralph went into the hall and found Blower on the

other side of the front door, which had been closed against him, nominally on account of the wind, by the landlady. In reality, she objected to Blower on general grounds, as one of a class whom she looked upon as idle and worthless. On opening the door Ralph saw the man, with a thick cloth cap tied about his ears, and his body imperfectly shielded from the rain by a collection of odd pieces of sack-cloth and cast-off mackintoshes.

He was drenched, and presented a very woebegone appearance, save in the face, which bore a look of cheerful indifference to the weather.

"You had better come in—as far as the mat," said Ralph, as a gust of wind and a considerable sprinkling of rain swept into the hall, the former playing havoc with the contents of the hat-stand, and whisking the almanac of the *Southern Independent* from its nail by the parlour door.

Blower came in, touching his cap first, and then removing it with a dexterous twist from behind.

"I beg your pardon, Mister Brooking," he said hoarsely, "but summat's gone wrong with Jim Gruff. I found him on the beach lyin' onsensible, and we've took him to the Blue Lion, where the doctor's examining him. He says Jim's been drugged. I put it down to his having had a drop."

Jim Gruff was the petty officer of the *Daphne*, a sort of boatswain and assistant navigator in one—a handy man in nautical matters, a very faithful servant,

and a great favourite of Ralph's. The intelligence brought by Blower was very disturbing.

"You are sure it is Gruff?" Ralph asked.

"I know him, sir, as I would my own brother," replied Blower, adding, after a moment's pause, "if I had one."

"Gruff ought to be aboard the *Daphne*," muttered Ralph; "I don't understand it. Wait a moment, Blower. I'll get you to show me the way to the Blue Lion, not being acquainted with that hostelry."

"It's used by men—in my line, sir," said Blower.

Ralph went back to Lyon with the startling piece of news, and a short discussion ended in both putting on their mackintoshes to accompany Blower to the inn patronized by him and others of his class. As the trio left the house, a fierce blast of wind sent them staggering back a pace, and Blower, who was engaged in restoring his cap to his head, had it torn from his grasp and borne away into the darkness.

"It don't singify," he said; "I shall find it somewhere nigh the fort in the morning. Them as sees it lyin' about ain't likely to 'propriate it."

Advising the young men to keep close to the houses and "walk a bit sideways so as to cut the wind a little," Blower took the lead, bearing in the direction of the west end of the town.

CHAPTER II.

JIM GRUFF DOESN'T KNOW ANYTHING.

UP a narrow street, fairly respectable in all probability, but of a class well-dressed people would instinctively avoid, Blower led the way. Here and there on the road a man or a woman was passed, but for the most part the thoroughfares were given over to the wind and rain. The Blue Lion was old fashioned, dingy outside and cramped within. Two steps from the street led downward into the bar, and on the right was the common room, into which it seemed Jim Gruff had been taken.

He was lying on a settle, with some pillows under his head, near a fire recently lighted. The doctor sat by his side, and a woman servant stood near to execute any orders he might give. All other persons had, by the doctor's orders, been excluded from the room.

The practitioner knew the young men and shook hands with them. In response to Ralph's anxious inquiry about the condition of the patient he shook his head.

"You see he is a short, thick-set man," he said, "strong enough in a muscular way, but heavy about the neck. Is he given to drinking?"

"Thoroughly sober—never touches anything that I know of," rejoined Ralph; "surely he is not intoxicated?"

"No," said the doctor, "he has been drugged—hoccussed is the cant word for it—but where and by whom is a mystery."

"Can it be anything in the way of a fit?" suggested Lyon.

"No," said the doctor; "I can smell the drug, and could give you its name if Blower wasn't here. But perhaps he knows what it is."

They all looked at Blower, capless and with his stubbly hair and rugged face dripping with rain. He was not handsome, his nose being a pug and his eyes small and close together. His mouth, on the other hand, left nothing to be desired in its dimensions. He was also very liberally furnished in the matter of ears. Not at all the sort of man, all round, to be certain of escaping from unjust imputations.

"I never knowed nothing about drugs," he said doggedly.

"What were you doing on the beach on such a night as this?" asked Ralph.

"Looking for floatsum and jutsum, as some people call it," answered Blower; "a man like me has to pick up a livin' all times of the year, and at day or night.

A southerly gale brings bits of timber ashore. Them's my firin'. It don't run to reg'lar 'lowances of coals with *me*. Boats get adrift too from the stern lashings of the yachts, and if they comes ashore I takes care of 'em and gets something for *that*. I don't go about pisoning people."

He was not aggressively indignant, but mildly remonstrative. The general belief was that he was innocent of any wrong towards Jim Gruff. Ralph assured him he was not suspected.

"I merely asked you a question," said the doctor.

"An uncommon pinted one," said Blower. "Say I'd hoccussed him. Should I drag him 'arf way here, hollerin' for help? Would that be nateral conduct, or the doing of a lu-natic?"

"What can you do for poor Gruff?" Ralph wanted to know as they turned again to the insensible man.

"I can do nothing," replied the doctor; "the drug must work itself off. He will be as well here as anywhere, and somebody ought to sit up with him, of course."

"I'll do so," said Ralph.

"By somebody I mean a medical man," answered the doctor smiling. "As soon as he comes round a little, he will require quick and skilful treatment; and if you will call at my place on your way back and ask my assistant to come here, you will oblige me, and do all you can for the present. He won't die, you need not be apprehensive about that. But in my

opinion it will be a full day—two or perhaps three—ere he will be able to give an intelligible account of the way he was drugged, and in what company he has been.”

Ralph offered Blower a few shillings for his services. To his surprise the money was refused.

“I don’t want to be paid,” he said. “I lives by odd jobbings, general help, and the floatsums and jutsums aforesaid ; and I can give my help free when it’s a feller creetur in want of help.”

He persisted in taking up the position of a man of higher feeling than a mere loafer who wanted to be paid for everything he did, and they left him, convinced that Blower was a better fellow than his appearance gave him credit of being. Having called at the doctor’s house, in a street hard by, and left the message for the assistant, they turned homeward.

“Come to my place,” said Lyon Lyster ; “Carrie and Bertie will be glad to see you.”

The Lysters rented a small furnished house fronting the sea. It was about two minutes’ walk beyond the residence of Ralph Brooking. The proposal was agreeable, for between him and Carrie there was something more than friendship.

They understood each other, but there was no declared engagement. That, however, was a matter which rested with Carrie. When Ralph, earlier in the year, asked her to be his wife, she told him he should have an answer when she returned from the

trip to the Mediterranean. It had been on the *tapis* since the spring.

It was after that that Ralph suggested his going with them in a sense, by voyaging in company with the *Iris*, in his own yacht. His reason, though undeclared, was intelligible to her. They would see much of each other at the places where the yachts might put in, and all through he would be near her. It would be possible, too, under favourable circumstances, to sail in close company, and at intervals exchange signals of a comforting and sustaining nature. They would not feel as if they were entirely severed.

Ralph did not suspect the reason why Carrie wished to postpone the engagement. He knew he had won her heart as surely as he had lost his own, and charged it to the natural delicacy of a pure-minded woman in dealing with a matter so momentous to her future. But Carrie's hesitation had a deeper root than that. She thought of the possibility of her never regaining her health. At intervals, with a break of two or three generations, the terrible malady of consumption had claimed a victim of her family, and if it was to be her lot to lose her life through its baneful influence, she hoped that Ralph, not bound to her, would feel the loss of her less than he would do if they were positively engaged.

It was a piece of delicately thoughtful consideration which you would have readily given her credit for, if you had seen her that evening as she met her brother

and her wooer. It was not her beauty exactly, though that naturally had its influence at all times, but her manner, so sweet, gentle, and yet indicating a strong reliance on herself to bear and murmur not, that won the hearts of all who knew her.

No sense of being in peril of dying ere she had tasted the full sweetness of life was visible as she gave Ralph her hand, and with a smile asked him what induced him to come out in such weather.

"Something has happened," he replied; "how are you, Bertie?"

Bertie was in the room with his sister, engaged in reading a book of travels. Absorbed in a thrilling narrative, he failed to notice the coming of his brother and Ralph until Carrie spoke.

Like his sister and brother, he was fair, and was almost as tall as Lyon, who was five feet nine, and several inches taller than Carrie. The slimness and general imperfect development of form, natural to a boy of seventeen, marked the most noticeable difference between him and his brother.

"The yachts have been driven from their anchorage," Bertie said, turning pale. Visions of wreck, a hope deferred and a dreary winter at home, with his disappointment weighing on his breast, uprose before him.

He was soon, to an extent, relieved by hearing the facts, but he was very sorry for Gruff. He and the old boatswain had been great friends almost from

their first hour of meeting, and the harmonious feeling was three years old.

"Perhaps he came ashore and got into bad company," he suggested; "and yet that isn't at all like Gruff."

"We may know all about it in the morning," said Lyon.

They talked over the mysterious affair, but all the theories they advanced ended in their being rejected as at least improbable. At ten o'clock Ralph rose to take his leave, and then it was observed that the gale had very materially abated.

"We may be able to sail to-morrow," said Bertie.

"I may have to wait for Gruff," replied Ralph, with a wistful look at Carrie; "but if you stay for me at Gibraltar, we can still do the Mediterranean in company."

Outside, he found the sky had cleared and the stars were shining. Away in the distance there was a moaning of the retiring wind, but little of it remained to disturb the sea at Little Crampton. High waves still rolled in, but less aggressively, and their roar had lost something of the angry tone of the past three days.

Ralph went home and to bed. He was restless at first, but eventually dropped off and knew nothing of things around him until the early grey of the morning. He arose and looked out of the window. A fog rested on sea and land, but the air was still, and there was the promise of a fine day.

He dressed, and hastened to the Blue Lion, anxious about Jim Gruff. The house was open, and a man was sweeping out the bar, odorous with the fumes of beer and tobacco consumed by departed guests. Ralph entered the common room, and found Gruff seated before a blazing fire with a wet towel round his head. By the table sat the doctor's assistant reading a book.

"Why, this is hearty, Gruff," said Ralph joyfully.

"I've come round, sir," answered Gruff; "but I've got a head full of bees swarming, it seems to me. How I come into this fix beats me hollow."

"Do you know nothing about it?"

"No, sir. The last thing I remembers is drinking a cup of tea in my cabin. It tasted bitter, and I thought a mossel of soda had got into it. The tea-chest stands next to the one with soda in the store-room. I'll change that when I go back. But who brought me ashore?"

"Steady now," said Ralph gravely; "you have no recollection of leaving the *Daphne*?"

"I am certain I didn't come on my own account, sir," replied Gruff; "my head's a-singing and a-buzzing, but it's clear enough on that point."

"Either some drug accidentally got into the tea," remarked the doctor's assistant as he closed his book, "or he was deliberately hocussed and landed. That's the solution of his coming ashore, I'm inclined to think."

"Hocussed?" said Ralph. "You adhere to that?"

"Most assuredly," returned the assistant; "and he must be a man of iron constitution, with vast recuperative powers, to have recovered so quickly."

"You have not quarrelled with any one?" inquired Ralph of Gruff.

"I had a few words with the Don, sir. He's brought a rough lot on board for a crew. There's only ten of them, it is true, but they are ugly enough for fifty. Foreign crews ain't nothing strange in these days, but we don't want them aboard a gentleman's yacht."

"Humph!"

Ralph was troubled. He feared that the "few words" mentioned by Gruff had been a serious quarrel between the boatswain and Don José Santioff, and the Spaniard had revengefully drugged him and put him ashore with the hope it would end in his disgrace. The pair had never got on well together.

"It seems to me, Gruff," he said, "that a most unseemly jest has been played upon you. I'll see into it as soon as the fog lifts. Do you think you can bear a ride home to my place?"

"I believe I could walk," said Gruff, but on rising to his feet he found that was as yet beyond his powers. So Ralph asked the man in the bar to get a cab, and having liberally paid for Gruff's night at the public-house, they left the place, dropping the assistant at the doctor's door, on the way.

CHAPTER III.

VANISHED.

“SO it was Blower as found me, sir,” said Gruff, as he sat by the window in an easy-chair; “but for him I might have died, and some people would have thought I lay about like a drunken rascal and perished in the storm. There’s a lot of nateral good in Blower, sir.”

“Do you think so?” remarked Ralph carelessly. Blower was all very well in his way, but he knew very little about him beyond that he was one of the shore “characters.”

“If I had him afloat for a year, I’d make a man of him,” mused Gruff; “he’s never had a fair chance, drifting into loafing through having no parents. He began it as a boy, and that’s what made the man.”

“Will you have another cup of tea?” asked Ralph. He was at breakfast. Gruff had not eaten anything—food was repulsive to him; but he could drink tea, and he had another cup.

“The fog’s clearing a bit, sir,” he said; “about ten

o'clock we shall see the yachts. If I might be so bold as to object to anything aboard, I'd ask you not to have the crew the Don's rummaged out from somewhere. It may be all very well for him to think of his countrymen, but my first thought is to have men who can handle the yacht."

"I'll look into the matter," said Ralph. "Perhaps I've allowed Don Santioff to have his own way too much. But he will learn that I am master aboard my own vessel."

A message had been sent to Lyon Lyster, and he presently came round with Bertie. The fog was getting lighter every moment. As the window commanded a view of the harbour, they would soon see the yachts at anchor.

All four gathered by the window. The air cleared quickly, and then, as a curtain rises, the remnant of the fog vanished skyward.

"There's the *Iris*," cried Bertie, "and—why, where's the *Daphne*?"

They all stared at the spot where the *Daphne* had been on the previous day. But it had vanished. Other craft, of varied sizes, lay about at anchor, but the *Daphne*, with her graceful hull and tapering masts, was not to be seen.

"Surely she can't have sunk in the night," gasped Gruff.

The silence that followed was unbroken for a while. Ralph looked at Lyon, who stared at him. Then the

word "lost" burst simultaneously from their lips. They turned, and picking up their hats darted out of the room, leaving Bertie and Gruff together.

"What a terrible thing, Gruff!"

"Mister Bertie, there's something more to learn. The *Daphne* ain't gone down. Not she! Lying where she did, she escaped the brunt of the wind; and if she had been forced from her moorings, she'd have drifted ashore. Do you think that could ha' happened and we know nothing about it? 'Tain't reason."

"What then can have become of her?" said Bertie, breathless still with amazement.

"Took away—stolen by that Santioff," replied Gruff. "That was what he brought that crew of rascals aboard for. I've had my suspicions for days that he was up to something. Hang him for a scoundrel! Mr. Brooking, being straightforrard himself, never can see anything wrong in others until it's forced upon him by their villany. But it was a daring thing to do, for the sea was high outside; and with the wind in the south-west, I don't see how he cleared the harbour."

"It is north-east—what there is of it," said Bertie.

"That accounts for it," said Gruff angrily. "It shifted last night, and he got the *Daphne* out without any bother."

"But where's he gone to?"

"The mischief only knows," replied Gruff, clasping his head with his hands; "it's enough to send a man

distracted. He hocussed me, the villain! put me ashore with the fear of committing murder on him. He's a coward at heart—I've seen it in his shifting eye. His being good-looking and carrying himself like one of the royal parties you see with a circus didn't take me in. I felt he was a bad 'un. Here comes the gentlemen back again."

Ralph and Lyon entered the room, their faces white and set with the amazement created by the vanishing of the yacht.

"Gruff, have you ever—of late, especially—had reason to think the *Daphne* was at all unsound in her timbers?" asked Ralph.

"There isn't a sounder boat in the world, sir," replied Gruff emphatically. "And, besides, if she has gone down, where are her masts? It's low tide; but, low or high, they would be sure to show above the water. We anchored in eight fathoms."

"A most inexplicable mystery," exclaimed Lyon.

"Gruff thinks Santioff has stolen the yacht," said Bertie.

"For what purpose? He would find some difficulty in selling her. In these days of ocean cables we can send a description of her all over the world," said Ralph.

"He took her," asserted Gruff.

The conviction stimulated him to anger, and, rising, he declared he was fit and well to go out and help in making inquiries. "I shall never rest," he declared,

"until I come across that treacherous villain, and shake the life out of him."

Gruff put on his hat, and accompanied the others as they returned to the open air. By that time the news of the *Daphne* having vanished in the night had got well about, and along the pier and quay of the little harbour was gathered a host of the curious.

Blower was about. He had recovered his cap, and was wearing it in the excitement of the hour the hind part before. But its condition was so reduced that it was as ornamental that way as it had been any time during the past five years, and just as useful to the wearer.

He saluted the yachtsmen, and gave his opinion of the affair. It coincided with that of Jim Gruff. There was, in short, no other solution of the mysterious departure of the *Daphne*.

The general excitement was intense. Ralph set the police to work, wiring along the coast to the south and east a description of the *Daphne*—grey hull, a red line round her waist, and masts raking aft. That done, there was nothing to do but to wait.

Ralph went home with the brothers Lyon and Bertie, to escape the inquiries of the persistent and the general worry. In the society of Carrie he found a little balm for his troubled mind.

"It may be some jest," she said; "or he may have taken the *Daphne* for a short cruise to test the crew."

"He had no right to do so," replied Ralph—"would

not have thought of it. No; he has stolen my beautiful yacht; and if I ascertain where he is to be found, there I will go, even if it be to the far corner of the world."

But the day passed, and no news came of the lost vessel—well found in every reasonable requisite for a long voyage. The crew was scanty, but, unless under exceptional circumstances, could be made to suffice. Whither had it gone, and with what object? It was one of the most amazing things ever heard of, and the like of it had never been known at Little Crampton.

"You must not allow it to hinder you," said Ralph to Lyon that evening; "the weather is propitious, but there is no knowing how soon it will change. Carrie's welfare before everything."

"You must come with us," said Lyon.

"How can I? News of my *Daphne* may arrive at any hour, and if I am away, the time of those who are seeking her may be wasted. No; you go, and I will remain here for a week. Then, if I learn nothing of her fate, I can come overland to Marseilles. We can meet there. Can you take Gruff with you?"

"Yes; and another good man or two, if I can get them," said Lyon. "But I will not leave for two days. It is Carrie's wish that I should stay."

Being Carrie's wish, Ralph had no more to say.

CHAPTER IV.

BLOWER COMES AGAIN TO THE FRONT.

“THE man Blower is here again, sir.”

Mrs. Cox made this announcement to Ralph as he came down the following morning, as if Blower's coming again was something equivalent to high treason, or at least a crime deserving of prompt punishment.

“Where is he?” Ralph asked.

“In the back yard, sir. He came round that way.”

Ralph thought a moment before deciding what to do. Possibly Blower had repented of having mounted on dignity-stilts the other evening, and had come to ask for the customary “trifle” for his services. But it was possible he had another and a better reason for calling, and Ralph desired Mrs. Cox to “show him in.”

Mrs. Cox, judging by the standard of ordinary seaside landladies, was a most estimable woman—not exacting, fairly honest, and usually able to keep her temper. But to have a man like Blower walking into her best parlour, and treading on that gorgeous

carpet with its roses as big as cabbages, and leaves of tropical size and colour! What *was* Mr. Brooking thinking of?

"Show him in—**HERE?**" she said.

"Yes, if you please," returned Ralph absently.

Mrs. Cox prudently abstained from saying anything more to so good a lodger, who paid his bill after a glance at the total, and left the consideration of the items to a time that never arrived. But she metaphorically crushed Blower by the scornful way she bade him come in, rub his boots well on the mat, and not go sliding along against the wall-paper of the passage with his dirty coat.

Blower carried out her instructions, and modestly entered the sitting-room—a place of abounding elegance in his eyes. He thought he had never seen such a carpet. Probably he had not. There were people who, having seen it, earnestly hoped they might never behold its fellow.

"Well, Blower, have you found any more hocussed people?"

"No, sir; but I've got hold of a man who's been drinking hard for three days, spent every penny, and, being a foreigner, don't know where to go to lay his head. He was to have gone away in the *Daphne*, sir."

"In the *Daphne*!"

"Was to have jined the crew, sir, but got drinking, and was left behind. I've been talking to him, and **HE KNOWS SOMETHING!**"

Blower spoke with a lowered voice and a glance at the door, as if he feared being overheard. Ralph bade him go on.

"He's asleep in a herring-curing shed, sir," pursued Blower. "There ain't no herrings there as yet, and nobody knows it but me. You must come and talk to him, sir. Tell him who you are. Offer to pay him something for the information he says he's got. He's the sort of man who would sell his father, mother, sister, and brother for a pound. But he's spiteful against the Don for leaving him behind, and he'll speak the truth—if he's paid for it."

Ralph decided to go at once and see this interesting foreigner. Ringing the bell, he desired Mrs. Cox, whom he met in the hall, to keep back breakfast until he returned. Then he went out with Blower at his heels, to the utter amazement of the good woman.

"Nice company for a gentleman!" she muttered. "I hope he hasn't lost his head as well as his yacht."

Ralph's head was all right; just at that moment it was remarkably clear. He accompanied Blower to the upper part of the town, where the herring-curing buildings were erected. Blower thrust his finger through a hole in the door of the first one they arrived at, lifted a wooden latch inside, and bade him enter.

"He's lying on a heap of old netting," he whispered. "I've drawn his knife out of the case, and put it behind a bit of board, in case he should be vicious."

The place was imperfectly lighted, but Ralph, as soon as his eyes were used to the gloom, saw the Spaniard lying in a dark corner, curled up like a dog asleep. He was a man of fifty, grizzly, and wearing a short beard. His once handsome face was marred by evil indulgence, and scarred by wounds he had received in private frays or on the battlefield.

"Wake up, old chap," cried Blower, shaking him by the shoulder.

The Spaniard awoke, and his hand went towards his belt, in which the case of the knife was fixed. He found it gone, and started into a sitting position.

"You shall have your weapon again in a minute," said Blower soothingly. "This is the gentleman I told you of."

"The owner of the *Daphne*?" said the Spaniard, in excellent English.

"I am the owner," said Ralph; "and if you can tell me what has become of my yacht, I will liberally reward you."

"It's bound for the American coast in the Pacific, about a hundred miles south of Santa Barbara," replied the Spaniard.

He made a sweeping motion of his hand that conveyed the immense length of the voyage projected more forcibly than the words.

"It is risky," he said, "but great is the prize to be won. And I am to be robbed of my share of it. Why? Because I love a little drink now and then.

Still Santioff may merely have forgotten me. Either way I lose, for he will not remember me if he is successful."

"You are speaking enigmatically," said Ralph, who thought the man was insane—the result of heavy drinking, probably; "be more explicit, please."

"You have heard of Sutter, the Swiss adventurer?" said the Spaniard.

Ralph reflected for a few minutes, and was obliged to confess he could not remember having heard of such an individual.

"He was in the country now known as California in one thousand seven hundred and forty-seven—"

"Ah, that accounts for my not being acquainted with him!"

"Be patient. I am neither a madman nor a jester, señor. Sutter was a man who, at the time I name, made his own little republic among a chaos of different bodies of settlers. It was called the New Helvetia, and he defied all other authority, living up a creek near where San Francisco now is, and the creek bears his name to this day."

"Historically interesting," said Ralph dryly; "but I do not yet see what Sutter has to do with the stealing of my yacht."

"I am coming to it, señor," said the Spaniard. "As sure as my name is Guido Castella, I speak the truth, and words you will do well to listen to. When was gold supposed to be first found in California?"

"I haven't the least idea."

"Señor, it was in Sutter's Creek, in the year forty-seven of the present century. It lay upon the surface of the dry land. It was scooped up from the shallows of the creek when the dry season set in. It was everywhere. Men revelled in it, and created a new land of gold. But think you that Sutter lived there and saw none of the precious metal?"

Blower, who was listening with distended eyes, hazarded a suggestion that "perhaps he didn't look for it."

"Pah!" exclaimed Castella, "he went thither to find it. He realized a dream, and he gathered it up in heaps and carried it away by a circuitous route to a spot beyond the reach of the many bands of settlers—French, Dutch, and English. There he stored it up; but not to enjoy it, for his enemies prevailed in a quarrel, and he was shot. It is to find his vast store of virgin gold that Santioff has left these shores."

"Again," said Ralph, "it is a very pretty story; but I do not see why he could not have gone to seek the hidden store without stealing my yacht."

"Ah," said Guido, with a smile of much meaning, "again you do not comprehend. For success he must have assistance, and a vessel to bring home the treasure, so he has waited his opportunity to gain both."

The Spaniard paused and wiped his dry mouth

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with a red handkerchief he drew from his pocket. Ralph watched him keenly, still in doubt. He asked another question :—

“How came you to have a knowledge of his object?”

“By espionage,” was the answer—“listening as he talked with the one man he has trusted ere he went away. He must trust all anon, give each a share; but that is a matter for after arrangement. At present his men only know they are going upon an expedition that will be profitable.”

“Can you give me more definite information about his destination?”

“I know no more than I have told you. He goes to some spot below Santa Barbara, say a hundred miles. He may have to go as far inland, but he cannot take the yacht with him. He must leave it in the sea, near the coast. Surely it is to be found.”

There was sound reasoning in this. Ralph was impressed by it. Yet another question he had to put to Guido :—

“Does this rascal go armed to fight? Has he taken more than the ordinary weapons of his people with him?”

“Of that I know nothing, señor. I think not. His purpose is not to fight but to acquire wealth, return to his own country, and live in grandeur.”

“He has but ten men with him.”

“That is the number. I would have made eleven.”

“And he will pick up no more on the way?”

"It is not his purpose to put in anywhere for men, as it would be running a risk of being stopped. He may possibly anchor in some South American port for water, not elsewhere."

"And you have positively no more information to give me?"

"Nothing more, señor."

"What price am I to pay you for the information you have given me?"

"I leave that to you, señor."

Ralph mused for a few moments. If the story were true, there was just a possibility of his recovering his yacht. His ideas as to the method of procedure were in a nebulous state, but he believed that they would assume a more tangible shape by-and-by. What if he retained this man in his service? An offer to do so would be a test of his sincerity.

"If I decide to make an effort to regain the *Daphne*," he said, "will you assist me?"

"To the last breath, señor," replied the Spaniard. "Where is my knife?"

"Give it to him, Blower," said Ralph.

Blower, with an inward misgiving, unearthed the weapon from its hiding-place. He was intensely relieved when he saw that the Spaniard did no more than kiss the blade and return it to its sheath.

"I am bound to you, through battle, fire, and water, señor," he said.

Ralph gave him a little money to go on with,

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adjured him to keep sober, and gave him the address of his abode.

"Come and see me this evening," he said, as he turned to go. "I may then be able to give you an outline of my proposed arrangements."

"I'll spend the time with him," said Blower in an undertone, "and keep him from the drink."

Ralph nodded approval of this proposal, and hastened away to find Lyon Lyster and consult with him about the steps that ought to be taken to make an effort to recover the vanished *Daphne*.

CHAPTER V.

THE DEPARTURE OF THE "IRIS."

"IT is a very strange story," said Lyon; "one ought not to give credence to it too readily."

"I am disposed to believe the fellow," rejoined Ralph.

It was a solemn conclave of four discussing the merits of the statement made by Guido Castella. Bertie sided with Ralph in his belief. Carrie took up a neutral position.

"It may be true or not," she said. "Is it so very far to go? You know how ignorant I am of geography."

"Thousands of miles," replied Ralph, with knitted brows. "But I think I could organize an expedition and take a body of men across the American continent; and if I found the *Daphne*—"

"She could spread her wings and fly away as soon as you are espied," interposed Lyon. "No, that scheme won't do. You must go by sea, and in the *Iris*."

"It would be a dangerous expedition," said Ralph, glancing at Carrie, who smiled as if not averse to the risk.

"Not specially," said Lyon. "To fit out another yacht would cost an immense sum of money. As for asking the Government to lend us a gunboat, that would be ridiculous. If we eventually succeeded in obtaining some assistance from the Admiralty, which I have little hope of, it would be granted too late. Red tape would be a fatal stumbling-block to the quick movement that is essential."

"There might be some fighting," suggested Ralph, and Bertie looked up quickly, as if a brush with an enemy of the Santioff class would be entirely in harmony with his desires.

"He has only ten men," said Lyon. "Guido gives a good reason why he has not taken more. Santioff doesn't want too many brother robbers to share the spoil. We could take twenty or thirty men. There is room in the *Iris* for them; and I see no reason why we should not carry a good supply of ammunition and small arms."

"We might even have a cannon or two," hinted Bertie; but Lyon shook his head.

"We must not run the risk of being mistaken for a filibustering gang," he said.

"Then there is the possibility that Santioff may after all augment his crew," said Ralph. "Say that he puts in at Rio Janeiro or at Monte Video, he could

easily get men of the requisite quality for anything in the way of desperate adventure with a promise of profit."

"You are thinking of me," said Carrie.

"You cannot be left at home," answered Ralph.

"With all due respect to the lost *Daphne*," said Lyon, "the *Iris* is the bigger and the faster boat. She can outsail your craft three knots or more an hour if threatened by Santioff with a superior crew in point of numbers. Our stores are ample, and can be easily added to on the way. All we want is a few more men and additional arms. What is to stop our getting either or both? There are a score men in the town who would gladly join us if only for the fun of the thing. The arms I could get from London in twenty-four hours."

"Put it to the vote," said Carrie. "I say one and all go."

"I'm with Carrie," cried Bertie, as he threw up his hand.

"Three to one," said Lyon laughing. "My dear Ralph, you must yield to the majority."

Ralph still hesitated; but Carrie insisted that the longer voyage would be more beneficial to her than the shorter one previously arranged. It was true that there was the terrible Cape Horn to get round; but she had an ample supply of winter clothing and furs, and once in the reputed balmy Pacific, what was there in a climatic sense to trouble about?

"It isn't cold I have so much to fear from," she urged, "as our damp climate. Doctor Grainger told me that entire change is the chief thing I need."

Ralph could but yield to the pressure put upon him, and it was decided that the *Iris* should be at once fitted out for the expedition. He appreciated the undoubted unselfishness of the arrangement, and was deeply moved by the disinterested love and friendship shown on his behalf. Time pressing, he left them to make a few necessary purchases, and to draw some money from the bank.

He desired the selection of the additional men to be made by Lyon, merely suggesting that Gruff would be a very good man to assist in navigating the *Iris*, as he had made several voyages round Cape Horn, and been up the Pacific as far as the Alaskan coast.

Ralph settled with Mrs. Cox, merely informing her he was going away in a few hours, at any moment it might be. Remembering his appointment with Guido Castella, he instructed her to admit him when he came, and to desire the Spaniard to wait if he should be temporarily absent when he called.

It transpired that he was out in the evening when Guido arrived. Mrs. Cox had no liking for foreigners, associating them all with impudent organ-grinders and persistent image venders, to whom she had ever given scant encouragement. Castella was in her eyes worse than either. His grandiose air and frowning face recalled to her mind a story she had read about

brigands, and she verily believed one had descended upon her abode.

"Mr. Brooking is falling into evil company," she said to the servant, "and I'm afraid harm will come to him. Mary, peep out of the side door and see if there is a policeman at the corner. I hope that awful man won't try to murder us."

The "awful man," to her intense relief, was as quiet as a lamb until Ralph returned. The interview between him and the Spaniard was short.

"You have told me a wonderful story," Ralph said, "and I am going to verify it, if possible. To-morrow, or the next day at the farthest, I sail with Mr. Lyster in the *Iris*. We shall take with us sufficient men to recover my lost yacht. You will go with us, of course?"

The Spaniard hesitated. Ralph may have been mistaken, but he fancied he saw his face change colour under the deep tan of his cheeks.

"You will be well paid," Ralph added.

"I will go with you," said Castella. "Expect me to-morrow."

He went away with the dramatic stride, a specialty of his race, and Ralph spent the rest of the evening with the Lysters.

Gruff meanwhile had gone on board the *Iris*, and the recruiting of extra men had been carried through in the most satisfactory manner.

"Somehow our arrangement has leaked out," said

Lyon, "and I could have had fifty men if I wanted them. I have selected twelve sturdy young boatmen, used to the work of a yacht, and, with my original crew of fifteen, we have twenty-seven good fellows, who will be a match for double their number of skulking Spaniards. Personally, I don't think in any case it will come to fighting."

In his heart he did not credit the story of Castella; but he had come to the conclusion that the lengthened trip would be a source of pleasure to all and be beneficial to Carrie. The very prospect of it seemed to have done her good, for some of the roses she had lost during the past year had returned to her cheeks.

So promptly had the additional arrangements been effected that by noon on the morrow the *Iris* was ready for sea. It only lacked the presence of the Spaniard, who had not put in an appearance. The rest were all on board, and along the harbour quay there were a number of the inhabitants keenly interested in every movement aboard the yacht.

The wind was in the north—a fair and favourable breeze. Anxious eyes were turned to the shore in expectation of seeing the Spaniard, for all were eager to up anchor and away. Ralph paced the deck with Lyon, the victim of impatience. Bertie and Carrie lounged in deck-chairs, amusing themselves with watching the spectators ashore.

"Why doesn't the fellow come?" said Ralph.

"He may not come at all," replied Lyon. "I see

no reason why we should wait for him. A treacherous Spaniard—"

"Treacherous!"

"He has betrayed his old associate, as I judge Santioff to be, and he may betray you."

"I will give him a little more time—two hours."

"Gruff says the wind may change in the evening. We ought not to lose the northern breeze."

"Well, we can sail at once if you wish it," said Ralph. "I am not particularly keen on having the company of Guido Castella."

A boat put off from the quay, and an oarsman in it pulled towards the yacht. Another man sat in the stern, and on the craft coming alongside the latter handed up a note fixed in a cleft stick.

"For the Señor Brooking," he said.

He spoke with a foreign accent, but he was not a Spaniard in appearance. He had the bright, vivacious face of a Canadian Frenchman. One of the seamen took the note and walked aft with it to Ralph. The boat promptly put about and returned to the quay.

"For me?" said Ralph in surprise. He had failed to notice the coming of the boat.

"Yes, sir," replied the man.

Ralph glanced at him and uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"Is it really Blower?" he asked.

"Yes, sir, it's me sure enough. Mister Gruff got

me engaged. Dress makes a difference in a man, sir, or you'd have noticed me afore."

It did indeed in his case. Very few people, unprepared for the change, would have recognized in the far from ill-looking man in the neat jersey, stocking-cap, and wide, blue trousers, the erewhile ragged and indisputably disreputably-clothed Blower, shore loafer.

Ralph congratulated him on his good fortune, and opened the letter. It had no envelope, and was merely folded and addressed, "The Señor Brooking." The contents were brief:—

"Señor, I cannot go with you. I am ill."

It was a miserable, sprawling scrawl, and Ralph, with an expression of disgust, tossed it overboard.

"The fellow has gone back to his drink like a pig to its mire," he said.

"I am not so sure of that," thought Lyon. "My belief is that he has foisted on Ralph a cock-and-bull story. He knows no more where the yacht has gone than I do."

There was no occasion for further delay. Lyon gave his orders: the anchor was raised and the canvas spread by the smart and ready crew, as a spontaneous cheer burst from the spectators on shore. It was the "God-speed" of many who were strangers but in sympathy with those on board the *Iris*. Opinion as to the truth of the story afloat and the probable result of the search for the vanished yacht varied, but the hearty good-will expressed in the cheer was unanimous.

CHAPTER VI.

LEON DE TEREUL.

SAN FELIPE DE MONTE VIDEO, to give it its full name, was basking in the first rays of the morning sun, the golden orb just peeping from the horizon of a quiet sea. The shipping in the little harbour, the circle of obsolete fortifications, the flat-roofed houses, and the two notable buildings of the place—the cathedral and town-hall—were all tinged with a rosy light, the promise of a fine day. It was a pretty picture to those on the deck of the *Iris*, which, after a voyage comparatively uneventful, was putting in to obtain some fruit, fresh vegetables, and a few odd stores.

Ralph, Lyon, and the crew of the morning watch in charge of Gruff, had the spectacle to themselves. All others were below, presumably asleep. It was a welcome sight after so much of sea and sky alone. Ralph saluted the town by raising his cap.

“Man,” he said, “is a gregarious animal. Much as I love the sea, I could not spend all my days upon

it. There is an inviting air about this town that is irresistible."

"It hasn't the sweetest of reputations," remarked Lyon.—"You have been here before, Gruff, I believe?"

Gruff was standing at a respectful distance from his superiors. He touched his cap and drew nearer.

"I have been in Monte Video about ten times I reckon, sir," he said, "and I've always found it a good place not to stay in longer than you can help."

"That's a left-handed sort of compliment," said Ralph. "What's the matter with the town or the people?"

"Neither are up to much," rejoined Gruff. "The houses are grubby, not to say uncommonly dirty, and the people are too mixed. Some are right enough, but most of 'em you may trust as far as you are obliged to—not an inch further."

"No difficulty about anchorage in the harbour?" said Lyon.

"The average is three fathoms," said Gruff. "We had better drop anchor off the eastern fort. It is out of the way of the traders, and you can land there in a quiet way."

The *Iris* was steered for the point he indicated, brought round to the wind, and her anchor dropped. The rattle of the chain as it paid out seemed to awaken the slumbering capital of Uruguay, for the wharfs and quays suddenly became alive with men

and boys, and sounds of bustle and life arose from the shipping. In the centre of the city there was a beating of drums, and the clear note of a bugle on the walls of the fort pierced the clear morning air.

As the sound, for many weeks past unheard, of the anchor being dropped rumbled below, many of the men came hurrying up to get a glimpse of the welcome shore; and Bertie, perfunctorily dressed, arrived on deck in hot haste.

"What a delightful place!" he said to Gruff.

"Not for you to visit alone, sir," replied Gruff; "and don't you be wentursome. Many a young man has gone ashore there and not come back to his ship."

Bertie shrugged his shoulders. He was very much obliged to Gruff for his advice, of course, but he thought he could take care of himself.

The *Iris* lay about two cables' length from the shore. Facing it was the end of the line of quays and a strip of shingly shore, backed by the stone walls of the fortifications. The arrival of the yacht had been observed, and a knot of men gathered on the beach, where several small craft lay drawn up out of the reach of the tide.

A boat was soon launched, and with three men in her approached the *Iris*. One seated in the stern wore some kind of uniform, half-soldier, half-dock official; and Lyon gave orders for a ladder to be swung over the side. The boat touched the *Iris*, and the uniformed man came on deck. He was a swarthy

half-caste of medium height, with a lithe, sinewy figure and good features, save in regard to the mouth, which was straight, and lips, so thin as to be almost invisible. His eyes were full, dark, and restless.

An old laced cap the worse for wear, a red coat that had seen better days, and a pair of white duck trousers that languished for an introduction to the copper and wash-tub, were the most noticeable articles of his attire.

"The captain—I seek him," he said.

"I am the owner of the yacht," replied Lyon. "My name is Lyster. Would it be an impertinence to ask yours?"

"Assuredly — no," replied the half-caste. He fumbled in the inside of the breast of his coat for a few moments and brought out a business-looking card. On it was printed by some amateur, or perhaps by a printer who was obliged to use a mixed type, the following announcement:—

LeOn DE TereUL

privat AND GOVERNment agent. Accredited.

"You understand," he said, when his card had been solemnly passed to Ralph and Bertie, "I alone am empowered. Of me you buy stores, so then you shall not be cheated."

"I merely want some fruit, vegetables, and a few odd things," said Lyon, "and water if possible."

"Water—it is dear," said De Tereul; "no rain for

a time. The cisterns are drying up, the wells have little. Of the things all you require I make a list."

"You have a good shipping trade here?" said Lyon, evading the list for a while.

"Most excellent," replied De Tereul enthusiastically, "more than all other ports singly."

"Yachts visit you occasionally, I presume?"

"Like this?" said De Tereul with a quick movement, as if his attention was suddenly drawn to an important subject.

"Yes," said Lyon with assumed carelessness; "one belonging to a friend of mine may have recently put in here."

"Yes," said De Tereul, nodding his head. "Her name?"

"The *Daphne*."

"So—and her look? How painted—how fitted?"

"Rigged as this is, but of smaller tonnage. Her colour grey, with a red line."

The half-caste bent his head as if to think ere he answered. But Ralph saw more than that in the action. He was startled, disturbed, and wanted a few minutes to recover himself. Presently he looked up with a smile upon his face.

"No such vessel been at Monte Video this year," he said; "last year, it was in the spring—"

"That would be too soon. I want some information about a vessel of this class that may have possibly put in here recently."

"If so, I see her," rejoined De Tereul, briskly, "for am I not the only agent accredited by the government? All buy of me. I make a list and get the requirements and bring them to you. It is done—no trouble."

"I think I will defer matters for the present," said Lyon. "We shall be coming ashore by-and-by."

"No," said De Tereul, "if you would live. There is fever—death in the city. Ah me, it is all desolating!"

"It's usual when there is fever in Monte Video, if it's bad, sir," interposed Gruff, "to hoist a black flag over the town-hall, as a warning to strangers. There ain't no law against our running the risk, and if there's fever at Monte Video it is a thing to give a wide berth to."

De Tereul turned to the old seaman with a sarcastic smile upon his face.

"You know so much," he said; "more than me, who live here—was born here. Come with me and I show you fever."

"Well, for the present, anyway, I will put off purchasing anything," said Lyon. "Good morning."

De Tereul gave the offending Gruff a malignant glance as he doffed his gold-laced cap and bowed low. Then with the air of a man who had done all he could for a stranger with an unsatisfactory result, he descended to the boat and was taken ashore.

"A persistent fellow that," said Lyon.

"The *Daphne* has been here—he has seen her. I

am sure of it," said Ralph excitedly. "Perhaps it was but a short time ago—yesterday. Who can tell?"

"After breakfast," rejoined Lyon, "we can go ashore and make inquiries of others who may not be so reserved."

"You will take me?" suggested Bertie.

"Somebody must remain with Carrie," answered Lyon. "It will be safer to have a look round before too many of us venture ashore."

Bertie sighed, but he accepted the virtual command of his brother, for he ranked as third officer of the *Iris*, and discipline came before all else. His personal desires went down before duty.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ACCREDITED AGENT DOES A DISCREDITABLE THING.

LEON DE TEREUL on landing hastened away through one of the fort gates to a *café* of inferior appearance in the heart of the town. It modestly hid its head in a side street, ill paved, with no visible means for public lighting at night, and as dirty as unbroken neglect of the scavenger could make it.

Frowzy women stood at the doors of the houses, engaged in loud-voiced gossip. Dirty children tumbled about in the mud and garbage of the narrow roadway. De Tereul was a familiar personage there, for some of the women hailed him as a friend, or at least an acquaintance.

"Morning, my Leon," cried one, "you are in haste. Who has come in to be robbed?"

He made no answer, but plunged into the *café*, to avoid a shower of personal remarks from other women. A few people were scattered about at the ill-cared-for tables, and towards one, seated alone at

the far end of the fairly capacious room, De Tereul hurried.

"Ha, my Adrian," he said, "you eat early."

The man he addressed wore the apparel of a Mexican of the poorer classes—knee-breeches, shoes and stockings, a sash around his waist, and a handkerchief bound about his head. He was about thirty years of age, and his skin was fairer than that of De Tereul, but still darker than that of a European.

"I eat when I can," he answered; "the hour too often comes when I cannot eat when I would."

"I have made a discovery," said De Tereul; "but first let me have some coffee."

He ordered it of a girl in attendance, and being supplied with it and a roll, attacked his modest breakfast.

"There is a yacht here seeking a yacht that has come and gone," said De Tereul, breaking a silence.

Adrian was not moved. He accepted the information indifferently.

"Let the new yacht find the old yacht and sink it, if it pleases anybody," he said.

"You do not understand," returned De Tereul, "the yacht that is gone was stolen."

"Well, many things are stolen every day. Why not a yacht?"

"Wait, you idiot. I know much, for I talked with some on board the yacht that has come and gone. It must not be followed by the yacht that is here."

"Who is to stop it?" demanded Adrian. "Can I or you?"

"No," answered De Tereul, with a cunning leer, "but he who owns it may go no further."

"For whose good?" Adrian asked.

"For ours. I have a plan. We cage the gay young bird and keep him till he who was here returns, as he said he would, for stores to carry him on to Spain. He is told we have his enemy in safe keeping, and he must pay for him to be put out—like a light. He will have treasure on board—I know it, for he has gone to seek it, and will not return unless he has it."

"And if he does not return?" Adrian was now listening attentively.

"Then we keep our bird until we give the other up, and no longer. It will be a speculation that has failed—nothing more."

"But why not dispose of him at once?"

"I blush for you, Adrian. If he is dead, the other will laugh at and defy us. Living, he will fear him. Can you not see?"

Adrian seemed to see by that time, but he was not very enthusiastic. He saw impediments in the way.

"He will want a big cage," he said.

"There is the dungeon of the Haunted Fort," whispered De Tereul. "Who goes near it? Haunted! I laugh at ghosts. I defy them."

"Who is to get him there?"

"You, my Adrian. He will come ashore. You

must be the guide to show him some wonderful thing. A lie will not be wanting from your lips. Lure him there. I will be on the watch, and will help you to fasten the cage."

De Tereul proceeded to go into minute details. Adrian listened attentively, and finally became a complete convert to the scheme. He lived by knavery and robbery at any time, murder at a pinch, and had no squeamish notion as to how money was to be obtained. So their plans were laid, and they left to watch an opportunity to put them into execution.

De Tereul returned to the neighbourhood of the harbour quays, and watched the *Iris* until he saw the boat lowered and Lyon and Ralph get into it. Four of the yachtsmen rowed them ashore, and De Tereul was there to receive them.

"Behold me," he said, "ready to assist you. Command me, and I will show you the city. Do you think I want commission? No, I am an agent accredited. Would I do a discreditable thing?"

"I hope not," said Ralph; "for all that, we do not require your services."

"You will need a guide," said De Tereul haughtily, "but you must look elsewhere. I wash my hands of you."

"Very good," replied Lyon; adding as the indignant agent strode away, "and if washed yourself from head to foot while you are about it, a general improvement in your appearance would be effected."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE HAUNTED FORT.

THE guide is a necessary creature in a strange land. In much frequented foreign cities he is a bore, cropping up almost at every corner and persistent in the offer of his services ; but in a place like Monte Video he is rarely required, and is proportionately scarce. This was what Lyon and Ralph speedily discovered.

First of all, on passing through a gateway in the fringe of fortifications, they found themselves in a maze of dirty, irregular streets, most offensive to the eye and the sense of smell. The dirt was in a measure to be accounted for by the difficulty of obtaining water save from the sea. But a supine municipal body had done nothing towards making arrangements for flooding the streets with salt water, and fresh water was far too precious to be wasted, even, as was apparent, in washing the faces of the inhabitants.

They would have been picturesque in a pictorial

way, but in the living form were not specially attractive. The ragged children with unkempt hair swarmed like rats in a granary, and the men and women mooned and lounged about in a listless way, as if life had no charm or interest to them.

The men scowled at the strangers, so conspicuously clean and neat in their attire, and as they all carried a knife or a pistol conspicuously displayed, Lyon and Ralph were desirous of getting into a better part of the city with all speed.

But which way were they to go?

They stopped at the end of a street with as many diverging thoroughfares as there are spokes in a wheel, and looked about them. A swarthy fellow came up, and touching the handkerchief bound about his head, addressed them in broken English:—

“Señors—lost? You want guide. I am here.”

“We want to find some of the better streets where the shops are,” replied Lyon.

“You follow me,” said the man.

It was Adrian, who had been dogging their footsteps, seeking an opportunity to introduce himself. He stepped forward quickly, heedless of a series of remarks thrown at him in a jeering way by some of the men and women, in a *patois* the two friends did not understand.

He took one of the streets on the left, and it brought him to the walls of the city, with a narrow way running alongside. Here the houses were in a

ruinous state, too ruinous for occupation. The windows and the doors were gone, roofs were off, and walls bulged threateningly, as if on the point of falling.

"A nice place this," remarked Ralph.

Lyon shrugged his shoulders. He was disappointed, not to say disgusted, with his early experiences of Monte Video. But he did not know that he was being guided through the neglected and avoided end of the place.

To the astonishment of the Englishmen, the narrow way was a blind street ending in a high wall. On one side was a huge door or gateway, standing ajar. Opposite was one of the many deserted houses.

"To go through here," said Adrian, pointing to the gateway, "is for us."

He pulled open the heavy door and it swung back, creaking on its hinges. Then he motioned for them to enter.

"I follow," he said, "and close the door."

They were passing in, unsuspecting of mischief, when Ralph caught sight of a face peering at them out of the gloom of the opposite house. Fearing an attack upon them was intended, he seized Adrian by the arm, and grasped him by the wrist as his hand was instinctively lifted in the direction of the knife in his belt.

"You rascal," he said.

"Hallo!" cried Lyon, "what is the matter now?"

Adrian struggled to release himself from the powerful grasp of Ralph, and their united weight forced Lyon beyond the open gate. The trio stumbled inside, and the door was closed with a bang.

"Draw his knife out of the sheath," cried Ralph, and Lyon quickly dispossessed the ruffian of his weapon. A blow sent him reeling against the gate that now appeared to be fast.

The place they were in was almost dark. The only light it received came from a small grating in the wall, above the heavy portal. It bore a strong resemblance to the cells one finds in ancient castles.

"This is some villanous trick," said Lyon, as he peered about him; "luckily I have taken the precaution to bring a revolver."

"I have one too," said Ralph, between his teeth. He was a bit out of breath from his brief struggle with Adrian.—"Now, my good fellow, will you have the goodness to explain what you mean by luring us here? Don't stir one step, unless you wish to be shot."

Adrian did not answer. He stood against the wall, slightly stooping, and breathing quickly. His eyes rolled about, and they could hear the grinding of his teeth.

"Speak up," said Lyon, as he pointed his weapon at the rascal; "I am in no humour for delay."

"Señor," answered Adrian cringing, "we are all betrayed by that villain De Tereul."

"Briefly, how?"

"Ah me!" sighed Adrian, "I should know him. He all bad. So now he come to me this morning and say, 'Two English come to-day. Speak to them. Guide them on to the Haunted Fort.'"

He stopped and groaned, as if weighed down by the weight of his sin. But the hypocrisy of it made little impression on his betrayed companions. He was curtly told to speak up, tell everything, and on their faith in his truthfulness would rest the consideration they might be disposed to show him.

He had no reason now for withholding anything from them. By accident or design he had been shut in to endure the miseries of incarceration in that dismal hole, for an unknown and possibly lengthened period. He was very conclusive on the latter point.

"No one here," he said; "it is banned—accursed by the priests. Long back—years and years—a holy father was murdered here. It was not to be forgiven."

"But is there no way out?" asked Lyon.

"Not now," said Adrian; "a staircase once, to the walls up over. But see, the priests block it—close it—no way out but by the door."

He said it could not be forced, for De Tereul had made preparations to plant against it sundry pieces of timber that no man could force away.

"And he means to leave us here to starve to death?" said Lyon, aghast in spite of his natural nerve and coolness.

"No," returned Adrian; "the grate—see it—loose. He get short ladder, and feed us—even as beasts wild."

It was a horrible outlook. But both Lyon and Ralph kept a clear head. They would be missed, sought, and found of course. Now they had the opportunity, they were desirous of learning all they could from Adrian about the "other yacht."

But he only knew that another yacht had put in at Monte Video only two days before. He had not seen it, he averred with many unnecessary oaths, and did not even remember its name, but on the *Daphne* being mentioned, he was sure it was not that.

"De Tereul speak of him once," he said, "but not the name—different altogether."

They had no reason to doubt he was sincere in this declaration, for he spoke of the object of the yacht as being the same for which the *Daphne* was stolen. It occurred to Lyon that possibly there were more than one in the race for the supposed hidden wealth of the Swiss adventurer Sutter.

"But one or a hundred hardly matters for the moment," he said; "our immediate necessity is getting out of this hole."

They tried to force the heavy door, Adrian assisting with all his might, for he was not only anxious to regain his liberty, but was possessed of a burning desire to find De Tereul and settle accounts with him. Adrian belonged to a race that has but one idea of

settling a quarrel. Bloodshed is the only way in their moral, or immoral code, in which satisfaction for a wrong can be obtained.

But the door refused to budge. De Tereul had secured it too well, and they soon ceased to exert themselves needlessly.

"Let us think," said Lyon; "wit often serves where muscular strength has failed."

But wit failed to come to their aid. Shouting was useless, for Adrian assured them that no sound they could make would be heard twenty feet away. And the inhabitants never came near a place so banned. The very spot on the walls immediately above it was avoided by the sentries. In that dismal cell they were as much out of the world as any captive in the deepest dungeon of a castle.

"For all that," said Lyon resolutely, "there must be a way out. I won't give up. Now, Ralph, you are a clear-headed fellow, think, think; and you, my swarthy friend, you may possibly hit upon some scheme."

But Adrian only shook his head and groaned. The rascal, who had joined in a vile plot without the least compunction, was the greatest sufferer of the three, for he was through and through a coward. Moreover, it was unpardonable that De Tereul should act so treacherously towards him. There is no sufferer like the engineer who has been hoist with his own petard.

CHAPTER IX.

BAD FOR DE TEREUL.

DE TEREUL was a man who did not do things by halves. It is true that the shutting in of Adrian was a thing done on the inspiration of the moment; but as it had been necessary to do it, or lose the more important men, he was not troubled with any qualms of conscience.

"He is a rascal, and will not be missed," De Tereul thought, in the ready way rogues have of recognizing the black qualities of their associates.

Having shored up the heavy door with some strong, short pieces of timber, and assured himself it could not be forced, he returned to the quay and had a look at the *Iris*. All was quiet on board there, for nothing was known of the fate of its captain and his friend; but by-and-by they would be missed, and there must be some delay. Their absence for a day or so must be accounted for. But how?

De Tereul took half an hour to think, and then had his plan ready. He engaged a boat, and was

taken to the *Iris*, presenting himself to Bertie, who was temporarily in command. Carrie was on deck, and the obeisance De Tereul made to her was bordering on the burlesque. She acknowledged it with the slightest inclination of the head.

Bertie was not favourably disposed towards De Tereul. He asked him what had brought him back so soon?

"If you have anything to sell," he said, "you must come again by-and-by. The captain is away."

"It is from him I come," replied De Tereul, with a gentle smile; "he send you a message."

"Well, what is it?"

"He have met an old friend in the city, and will stay with him for the day."

"Met a friend here!" said Bertie; "what is his name?"

De Tereul shrugged his shoulders, implying he did not know.

"At least you can tell us where he lives," said Bertie.

"Am I to know where all strangers are to be found?" asked De Tereul, with a deprecatory smile; "you ask too much. At a *café* or hotel, perhaps. In a private house it may be. How shall I know? I bring the message, and have done. Make me not responsible for other particulars."

He put on a look of indignation which was practically wasted on Bertie. Carrie asked where De Tereul had met Lyon?

"In the streets—over there," was the vague reply. The wave of a hand accompanying it was no assistance towards a clearer idea of the place of meeting.

"There is something strange about this message," said Carrie to Bertie.

"Queer," he answered, fixing his eyes on De Tereul, who smiled, wriggled, and murmured, "I am not responsible."

"Carrie," said Bertie, "I'll go ashore with this—gentleman," Bertie had a difficulty in getting out the word, "and get him to point out the spot where he saw Lyon and Ralph."

"You must not go alone," said Carrie.

"I'll take Blower with me."

Blower was summoned, and on learning what was wanted of him was soon ready. Acting on the advice of Gruff, he armed himself with a stout stick of the size and quality of an Irishman's shillalah, and secreted a revolver under his jersey.

"Don't be too free with the stick," advised Gruff, "but if you must use it, hit hard. That fellow is a bad 'un."

As Bertie was about to depart in the boat with the unwilling De Tereul, who had not expected this development, Carrie asked him not to go too far away. "We may be troubled with groundless fears," she said.

"I don't suppose anything serious has happened to them," replied Bertie, "but I want to get at the bottom of the message. There is some trick in it."

De Tereul was very dignified as the boat conveyed him and the unlooked-for extra passengers to the shore. He maintained a chilly silence, which also failed in seriously affecting the imperturbable Bertie. When the boat touched the beach, Blower was first out, and ready to keep close attendance on De Tereul.

The half-caste put his hands into his pockets, and assuming an air of utter indifference, marched towards the nearest entrance to the city. He walked quickly; but Blower kept up with him, at a handy distance for using his stick, if De Tereul attempted to run.

Bertie walked a pace or two in the rear. Thus they passed under the walls, and entered the maze of dirty streets where Lyon and Ralph had been at an earlier hour.

As before, here were the hordes of grimy children, the frowzy women, and the scowling men. De Tereul was again subjected to a fire of jeering remarks, which he took in exceedingly ill part, and soon began to fling back retorts.

If Bertie had understood the language, he would have realized that, poor as the inhabitants of the streets were, they looked upon themselves as something better than De Tereul. In their *patois* they called him names kindred to "crimp," and other odious epithets bestowed upon the bad characters that infest seaports. He was asked what he had done with the two Englishmen he had been seen with an hour or two before? Suggestions that he

had murdered and robbed them were not lacking. In short, he was the recipient of a running fire of taunts, none the more agreeable because they were well merited.

He suddenly stopped in the middle of one of the narrowest streets and said curtly, "It was here I met your friends; it is here I parted with them. It is for you to seek them now."

He was about to walk away, but Blower was not disposed to let him go. He seized him by the arm and gave him a mild tap on the head with his stick.

"Wait till you get leave to march," he said.— "Mister Bertie, I wouldn't let him go until he gives a better account of meeting the captain."

Bertie was of the same way of thinking. A crowd of old and young gathered round to enjoy, as they hoped, the confusion of De Tereul, who assumed a defiant bearing.

"Let me go," he said; "I am an accredited agent. The government of our great republic will demand satisfaction for this outrage."

"The government of your grandmother," muttered Blower irreverently. "Mister Bertie, let me take him back to the *Iris*."

"Stay a moment," said Bertie. "I can see by the manner of these people that they know something about this man, not entirely to his credit. Is there anybody here who speaks English?" he asked of the silent, watching crowd.

Blank looks were all the reply he obtained for a few moments. They did not understand him. Bertie repeated the question in a louder voice, and then there came an answer from the rear of the crowd.

"Me, señor—of words a few."

An old man, bent with age, pushed his way through the crowd. He had been a sailor in his earlier days, and had served for a while on board a British trader. He was willing to answer any questions. Who was De Tereul? "A scoundrel who lived by plundering strangers. A dog that has sighed for a hanging any time these ten years." The old man showed he was not afraid of him when De Tereul began to bluster and threaten.

"Peace," he said; "the old lion shakes not before a wolf, young or in years."

Bertie asked after Lyon and Ralph. Had anything been seen of them that morning? Not by the old man, but he appealed to the crowd, and a perfect chorus of answers was the result. The general tenor of them was translated by the old man to Bertie.

"They passed with the thieving dog," he said.

"Blower," said Bertie, "get that fellow back to the beach. He's got to go aboard the *Iris* and stay there until we know my brother and Mr. Brooking are safe."

But De Tereul was not disposed to be taken to the yacht. He knew that it would be fatal to his project, fatal to himself. So he resisted and fought for his liberty, to the great delight of the howling crowd, to

whom it was a free spectacle, quite equal to the best of shows.

In the midst of the rioting resulting from the struggle there was a sudden scattering of the crowd, and two of the native police, more soldiers than anything else in appearance, arrived. De Tereul must have been known to them, for without the slightest hesitation they pounced upon him and secured his wrists with handcuffs.

The crowd again lapsed into silence, and explanations were given to the police by the old man interpreter. They sufficed for the immediate removal of De Tereul to the police-office, Bertie being requested to accompany the officers and their prisoner.

The "accredited agent of the government" was sorely tried as he was led away, by the gibes of the crowd that eddied around him. He tried to march as if indifferent to popular execration, but with poor results. When the throng entered a broad street in which the town-hall stood, his head was hanging low and his feet shuffled rather than walked over the ground.

In the police-office there was an imposing man in a gorgeous uniform, with a retinue of humbler officials, and the proceedings that ensued were up to examination-before-a-magistrate standard at home. De Tereul would say nothing beyond repeating his story of having met the two Englishmen, and been entrusted by them with a message to deliver.

"Is it a crime to carry messages?" he said. "Search me. Have I the property of the gentlemen on me? No. I am innocent. Let me go."

"You are an utter villain," said the gorgeously attired official, "and one day will surely hang. Put him into a cell and guard him close."

The "accredited agent" was hustled out of the office with scant ceremony, and Bertie remained for a while talking with the head official, who promised to investigate matters, and meanwhile warned Bertie not to think of shifting the *Iris* from her anchorage.

"I see no reason why I should do so," Bertie said in surprise.

"There is something strange about the affair of this De Tereul," was the cool answer; "it must be investigated. It may be that somebody has conspired to have your friends removed; I do not know. But here you must stay until the missing men are found, and everything explained."

Bertie left the office more worried than he had hitherto been about Lyon and Ralph. It appeared to him, from what he had gathered about De Tereul, that he was something more than a common knave. Possibly the absent ones had returned to the *Iris*. If they were still away, surely something serious had happened to them.

CHAPTER X.

A DESPERATE FEAT.

"NOT returned."

Carrie looked tearfully at Bertie as she gave him this unwelcome piece of information. He had hoped, as he came back to the *Iris*, to find Lyon and Ralph there; and now that he knew the worst, all the colour fled from his cheeks, and he sat down upon a deck chair, burying his face in his hands.

"It is yet early in the day," Carrie said; "it takes time to make purchases, and they would lunch at a *café*, of course."

"They said nothing about it," said Bertie, looking up, "and must have been in queer company. That De Tereul is a very bad fellow."

He told her the story of the street disturbance, and the subsequent incarceration of the "accredited agent."

Blower, meanwhile, had enlightened Gruff in the same direction, and the old seaman came aft. Touching his cap he expressed a wish to make a suggestion.

"Do, Gruff," said Carrie; "is there anything to be done?"

"I'll go ashore, miss," said Gruff. "You see I've been there before, and know something of the ins and outs, especially those among whom I fear the gentlemen have fallen. I don't want any one with me,"—he said this in response to a movement from Bertie expressive of his desire to accompany him,— "because I had better be by myself."

"What can you do alone?" asked Carrie.

"I'll do whatever is necessary, miss, you may depend on it. I can't lay out no programme, because it isn't easy to say what'll turn up. I'll wait aboard until close on sunset."

"But if they should be in peril of their lives—"

"I can't think that, miss. Anyway, to be in peril of your life in some places is to lose it. I'd go at once, but I don't want to be seen by everybody. It's a secret move I'm up to."

As there was still some time before sunset, they hoped still. But the hours went by, and night was at hand, when a feeling akin to despair lay upon all on board. Gruff professed to think that everything was right, and that really there was no cause for deep anxiety; but his look belied his words. As it was getting dusk he went in the gig, and was landed on the now deserted beach.

"Let a watch be kept for me," he said softly as he stepped ashore; "keep off and on until I bring the captain and Mr. Brooking along."

"Right, sir," answered the men. There were three

of them, and all assumed a cheerfulness they did not feel.

Gruff walked away, and entered the city by the same gate as had been used by the officers of the *Iris*.

The dirty streets were wrapped in a profound gloom. No lamps were visible, but over the house-tops there was a faint glare, showing that the better parts of the city were lighted up. Gruff kept in the middle of the road, with a watchful eye on sundry skulking figures dimly outlined against the walls of the miserable abodes of the people.

Gruff knew there were men behind those walls who would make light of assaulting and robbing, perhaps murdering him; and when one of the shadowy forms came near him, he thrust his hand into the dark pea-jacket he had donned for the occasion, and grasped a weapon he had provided for defence.

But none interfered with him, and soon he halted at the corner of a street in which two or three houses were lighted up. From one came the sound of musical instruments playing some poor dancing melody. He knew what it meant. Dancing was going on in a low-class *café*, and there he had better go as one of the possible places where he could obtain the information he sought.

Gruff was a brave man, but as he recalled a scene he had once witnessed in Monte Video at night, he hesitated. Scenes of robbery and violence are not the specialty of the Uruguay capital, but the one that

came back to his mind was unusual in the intensity of a general fight, and the number of men who lost their lives. There was the young English sailor, for instance, whom Gruff had warned against going ashore, and had, indeed, come to seek him. How well he remembered finding him lying on the floor of a saloon bereft of life, oblivious of the frenzied work with knife and pistol that was going on.

It was twenty years ago—true, but as he stood hesitating about entering the *café*, it all came back to Gruff as a thing of yesterday.

"And it's the very *café*, too," he muttered; "not much changed outside, unless it is for the worse. Things don't improve in South America. Everything sinks and sinks. There isn't any rising in 'em."

He went to the entrance of the *café* and peeped in through the opening between two doors slightly ajar. Very few people were there, and all were of the town, young men and women indulging in coarse dissipation as an antidote to their meagre, grinding, daily life.

Apart from the rest one man sat alone. He had a glass of absinthe before him, and a cigarette between his lips, as he looked on the spectacle of youthful folly with indifference.

Gruff knew the sort of man he was—gambler, adventurer, anything to get money rather than by honest work. Money was the open sesame of his tongue, and Gruff had brought a handful of dollars with him to invest if he could profitably do so.

He went into the *café* and in a casual way sat down by the table of the lone man, giving him good-evening. A glance and a nod were bestowed upon him in return.

"I am looking for a friend—two of them," said Gruff.

"So," replied the other; "and you do not see them?"

"No. I will give ten dollars to hear of their whereabouts."

Gruff brought forth the money and held it out. The other glanced at it, but did not take it.

"I know nothing of them," he said.

"Take the money," said Gruff, thrusting it on the man, "and tell me the likely places where to look for them."

"Anywhere, everywhere in the city—if they are here," was the answer; "all the likely places are wiped out—done away with. They got too warm—too much going on. It is all over. Yet one might find a place to lay a dead man in. There are many houses down by the Haunted Fort where a score of men might lie in peace for years."

"I forget the place," said Gruff.

"I will show it to you," said the man, rising; "pride forbids me to take money without working for it. I am no beggar."

He had a swaggering air, but Gruff had met with gentlemen of his class before, and was not deeply

impressed thereby. Nor was he prostrated with humility when the other produced a dirty piece of pasteboard and asked him to read the name of "Count Irabeau" printed thereon.

"You see," said the count grandiosely.

"Yes—I see, right enough," answered Gruff, "and naturally I feel obliged to you for sinking the difference atween us on this occasion. But you were speaking of the Haunted Fort. Why go there?"

Gruff had his suspicions that the count knew more than he cared to tell, and that by chance he had met with the very man who could assist him more than any other in Monte Video. The answer of the count verified his half-formed belief.

"Why should I deceive you?" said the count, twirling his moustache. "This morning I was at a *café*—no matter which. I live in *cafés*, and am known and honoured in all. Let it suffice. I sit there and see De Tereul and Adrian in close conference. They are both rascals. I listen without thinking—from mere habit. I catch the words 'Haunted Fort'—no more. To me they are nothing then. But I hear of De Tereul in prison on suspicion of luring two Englishmen away. You come to me. The report is confirmed. I put this and that as two and two together, and the whole thing is clear. By the Haunted Fort we shall find your friends. Am I a fool?"

"You are a livin' wonder," said Gruff, with an admiration that was not wholly sincere. He wished

to be moving on about his business above all, and the count was a man to be lured, not driven. Every moment might be precious.

"It is not the first time I have shown my power of deduction," mused the count; "but I will not weary you now with stories of my past great career. Come, I am ready."

Gruff eagerly followed him out, and the count, whose title was perhaps the creation of a vivid imagination allied to ambitious social yearnings, swaggered through the devious ways that led to the district about the Haunted Fort. As they entered the narrow, blind thoroughfare, the sound of falling masonry fell upon their ears. The count stopped short.

"Be wary," he said; "some of the old houses are coming down."

"It was only a few bricks at the most," returned Gruff; "there's another, and another."

The way was dark as pitch, and they had very good reason for hesitating. The respect for falling tiles and bricks is universal. Very few people rush heedlessly into such company. More masonry fell; then there was a sound of timber tumbling to the ground.

"I must be pardoned for not going down there to-night," said the count as he drew back.

Gruff was about to urge him on, when the tread of hurrying feet and the voices of men were heard.

They were speaking hoarsely, and one coughed violently. The count evinced a disposition to hastily retreat, but Gruff planted himself in the way and motioned for him to remain.

Three figures came out of the gloom, and it was by their outlines that the boatswain recognized two of them.

"The captain and Mr. Brooking!" he cried joyfully. "I'm thankful—" and then he broke down.

"Gruff!" exclaimed Lyon, who was foremost.

There was but the smallest modicum of light to break the darkness, but the eyes of all had grown used to the deep shadows of the night. Gruff saw that the two friends were in an unwonted state, their clothes torn, and their faces and forms covered with dust and dirt.

"We've had a rough job," said Ralph, "but we've got through one of the toughest walls ever put together by man."

CHAPTER XI.

FLIGHT AND PURSUIT.

IT was no time for explanations. Ralph and Lyon were in an exhausted condition, and they were desirous of getting on board the yacht without a moment's delay.

"You must tell us how you came here, by-and-by," said Ralph, "and we will let you into the story of our imprisonment. Who is your friend?"

The count introduced himself. He had guided Gruff thither, and though above all mercenary considerations he was willing to receive a *douceur*, a something to remind him of the happy services he had rendered. On being reminded by Gruff that he had already been paid for his escort he became rather offensive, and finally walked away muttering threats of a most direful nature.

His anger was seemingly of small moment, but it afterwards transpired that even a pseudo count can make himself felt. Adrian, who hung in the rear of the rest until an inhabited part of the town was

reached, was literally a wreck as to clothing. His hands were cut and bleeding, and he had an ugly wound upon his forehead.

"Señors," he said, stopping short, "it is here we part. Bear me no malice, and I shall consider myself well paid."

"Take this," said Lyon, as he emptied some money out of his purse and offered it to him; "use it to start in some honest living, and forego your murderous intentions with regard to De Tereul."

"He is in prison," said Gruff.

"That is good news," cried Adrian, gleefully; "they will hold him if he has anything against him. Señors, adieu. A safe voyage, and a speedy recovery of the stolen yacht."

He touched his forehead and disappeared down the street. Lyon and his companions passed through the gateway to the beach, and Gruff signalled for the boat that was lying a short distance from the shore.

It was watched for on the yacht, for none as yet had thought of sleep. As the two escaped friends mounted to the deck Carrie threw her arms about the neck of Ralph. Neither in that moment of supreme relief thought of the torn and ragged clothing, the grimy features, or aught else but the joyful fact that they were restored to each other.

"Give us something to eat and drink," cried Lyon; "attend to it, Carrie, while we make ourselves pre-

sentable. Can't you see that Ralph looks as if he had been taking a turn as amateur bricklayer's labourer?"

The story of their escape from the wretched place they were incarcerated in can be briefly told. It was a thought of Lyon's that led to it.

"If we can work out that grating and some of the stones around it," he said, "we shall have a hole big enough to get out by."

The grating, being over the door, was not accessible save by one mounting on the shoulders of the others. This was the expedient they adopted, changing about and using their knives to pick out the mortar, which was of the old-fashioned quality, nearly as strong and durable as cement.

It was terrible labour, performed upon an insecure scaffold that trembled and groaned, in spite of its fortitude. Ralph and Lyon made light of it now that the thing was a matter of the past, but their hands bore witness to the almost mad energy with which they had performed their task.

"Hours went by," said Lyon; "the dust choked us above and smothered us when we took our turn below. A pint of water would have been cheap in exchange for a handful of gold, but it was not to be had. The hole was big enough at last, and Adrian being at the top recklessly plunged through it head first. He must have hurt himself, for we heard him fall upon the ground; and he might have gone away

and left us, but he was true to his promise to show us he repented of having joined De Tereul in the villanous attempt to imprison us. Adrian pulled away the timber from the door, and we rushed out with a feeling of joy so deep that it bordered on pain."

"And the idea was to keep you there for weeks, months perhaps," said Bertie.

"So Adrian said," replied Ralph; "it was the scheme of a fool or a madman. We must soon have died in the horrible hole. Ugh! I shall dream of it for years. I can never forget it."

"The vexing part of it is that we might have overhauled the *Daphne* in a day or two, but for this miserable business," said Lyon; "she was only a day or so ahead, and short-handed. Now we have lost two days at least. But we will up anchor and away in the morning."

It was very late, close upon four o'clock, when they turned into their bunks, to sleep soundly until long after sunrise. Lyon when he awoke looked at his watch and saw it was ten o'clock. He tumbled out and hastily began his morning toilette. Before he had finished it Bertie lounged in.

"You ought not to have let me sleep so late," said Lyon, reproachfully; "hours of valuable time have been lost."

"Not a bit of it," answered Bertie; "we can't move."

"What's the matter?"

"A fellow in uniform came on board at sunrise and told us we were not to prepare for leaving. Gruff was hustling the men around, you must know. We are to wait here until De Tereul is tried."

"And when will his trial take place?"

"Gruff says there is no telling. The courts sit very irregularly, and it is not the custom to take all the cases. Prisoners have been in jail for a year or more awaiting trial."

"I won't stay here," said Lyon, resolutely.

"You must," said Bertie, with an irrepressible grin; "they've set a second-hand gunboat they've picked up in some European naval shop, to keep an eye on us. She's anchored so near that you might almost shake hands with the captain, who is altogether too gorgeous a creature for a gunboat. He ought to command a fleet of ironclads at least."

"What does Ralph say to this turn of events?"

"He's on deck with Carrie, and getting along quite cheerfully."

"We came out for a certain object, and it's got to be carried through," said Lyon, decisively; "spooning is all very well, I daresay, but I shall feel it incumbent on myself to rouse him to a sense of duty. He owes it to *me* that there should be no supineness in seeking the *Daphne*."

Lyon was irritated; but when he went on deck he found that Carrie had left Ralph, and that he was duly sensible of the misery of the prospective delay.

"What's to be done?" Lyon wanted to know.

"Sham complaisance—humour the authorities, and clear out after dark, if the wind and tide serve," said Ralph.

Gruff was called into council. The tide would serve about nine o'clock, and with the wind right he thought the *Iris* could steal out without detection. By the morning she would be too far away to be pursued.

"They keep a poor watch on board, sir," said Gruff contemptuously. "There don't seem to be no order or discipline. The officers think it's enough to strut about in their uniforms. The men eat fruit and something like macaroni, smoke and sleep. There's half a dozen of 'em in the forecastle now, curled up like dogs, close to the capstan. It's a steamer, too, is this 'ere *La Plata* boat, as they calls her; but, bless you, I don't think she's got so much as a cinder in the furnaces."

"But she has guns, and can shoot," suggested Ralph.

"She may fire 'em," replied Gruff, "but if we can get away two cables' length they won't be able to hit us."

All that day things went on quietly on board the yacht. Gruff let it be known to the men what was expected of them when night came on—"a smart raising of the anchor, swift shaking out of the canvas, and little noise while doing either."

The officers of the gunboat were very pretty to look at in their uniforms of blue and gold. They were much on deck, and although not quite so near the *Iris* as Bertie had said, they were close enough to espy Carrie as she sat on deck reading, and to favour her with many approving looks, of which she was entirely unconscious.

It was a dreary, anxious day for the most part, but a surprise awaited them in the evening. Count Irabeau arrived with an officer of the civil court to serve a species of writ on Lyon and Ralph for the sum of one hundred dollars, due to the said count for "services rendered."

It was an outrageous claim, and Lyon repudiated it. "Your services, count," he said, "were well paid for. I refuse to recognize this claim."

"You hear," said the count to the court officer, a seedy member of the ordinary bailiff class, "he can dispute with me, but he must deposit with you the value of the claim."

The bailiff said it must be done. It was only just, as the *Iris* might sail before the case was tried, and that "would be an injustice to the count."

Both count and bailiff were ordered to leave the yacht, and the latter prudently took himself to the boat, from whence he gave to unheeding ears an address on the civil laws of Uruguay.

The count doggedly remained on deck until the sun went down, then he was politely but firmly told

he must depart, or, as Gruff without circumlocution informed him, "be heaved overboard."

The boat was still in attendance, having waited a whole hour for the persistent count. During his time on board he had been using his eyes, and the quiet preparations for departure going on did not escape his attention. The probability was that he knew of the veto against the departure of the *Iris*, for on receiving the ultimatum from Gruff he descended to the boat in waiting.

Little heed was paid to his departure. He was gone, and that sufficed for all. Dinner was served in the chief cabin, and our friends sat down to it. In a little while they hoped to be out of the harbour and in the open sea. The tide was already on the turn. But in the midst of the jubilant references to their early going, a message came from Gruff for Lyon to come on deck.

It was quietly delivered by Blower, and the leaving table by Lyon was scarcely noticed. Ralph and Carrie being occupied with each other, Bertie alone observed it.

"They are waking up on board that 'ere gunboat," said Gruff to Lyon as he stepped on deck; "just look at her funnel, sir."

There was a glow of fire visible from the said funnel, and the inference was unmistakably clear. The *La Plata* was getting up steam.

"I think we may thank the count for that, sir,"

said Gruff. "I noticed, without thinking much of it, that, as he left here, he steered the boat over to the *La Plata*. You may depend on it that he spied what we were intending to do, and has taken the information to the captain. He ain't above turning an honest penny any way."

"Can we move now?" abruptly asked Lyon.

"Everything's right for it, but for the guns of the *La Plata*," answered Gruff. "They may be trained on us."

"But will they dare to use them? This is a British vessel."

"These cheeky small American republics, sir," said Gruff, "are just like little boys in the street—they'll have a go at a big one, because they know they won't be hit back again unless they are wery specially aggrawating."

"I'll risk it," said Lyon. "Pass the word. Up with the anchor. Set every stitch of canvas. I'll take the helm myself."

"South-east by south it is, sir. We shall stand well out then and give 'em less chance of finding us in the morning."

A few whispered words, and the men were at their posts. Two-thirds went aloft to let loose the sails. The rest were at the capstan. Another word, scarcely audible along the length of the yacht, and with swift, silent, naked feet the men moved round the capstan. Some creaking and rattling was unavoidable.

Not a sign or sound from the gunboat.

"We shall give them the slip," thought Lyon, as he took his place at the wheel.

He was missed below, and Bertie came on deck, followed by Ralph; Carrie by their desire remained below. Ashore were the city lights, and around the harbour glimmered the lanterns of the shipping. The glow of the *La Plata's* funnel increased. A voice on deck giving orders, apparently in a stealthy way, floated towards the *Iris*.

"Not all asleep," said Lyon to Ralph. "I hoped they were."

With her anchor free, the *Iris* swung round to the tide and caught the wind. Great clouds of canvas billowed overhead. She was moving.

"Can they see us?" asked Ralph.

"We shall soon know," grimly answered Lyon.

"I see her lights. We don't seem to be going at all."

"What is that?" exclaimed Lyon, as a peculiar swishing sound reached them. "Her screw! She is going with us!"

Gruff had made a similar discovery and came hurrying aft.

"What does it mean, Gruff? Why doesn't he hail us?"

Lyon put these questions in a low tone. He had his own troubled thoughts upon the matter, but did not care to give them vent.

Gruff was not so reserved.

"She's going out with us until we are clear of the shipping, sir," he said ; "then she will hail us, and if we don't lay to they'll try what their guns can do."

Bertie was near them, listening. To him the situation was thrilling, absorbing, delightful. But it lacked one thing to make it perfect.

"Lyon," he said sorrowfully, "you wouldn't listen to me when I suggested bringing cannon on the *Iris*. If you had done so, we could have had a fair fight with the fellow. Now we have to run as if we were afraid of him."

Lyon made no answer. He was thinking the situation over, and mentally endeavouring to devise some means of evading the enemy, as he now considered the *La Plata* to be.

CHAPTER XII.

THE "IRIS" SHOWS HER SAILING QUALITIES.

"THE wind's rising," said Gruff. "I believe, sir, we shall have to take in some of the top canvas afore long."

"It may be brought down for us," replied Lyon. "How close that fellow sticks to us!"

They were almost clear of the little harbour now. In five minutes the *La Plata* would be free to hail the *Iris*, and sink her if she proved recalcitrant without danger to the other shipping. A light flared on board the gunboat for a moment and then went out.

"Getting a rocket ready, sir," said Gruff.

Whirr! The rocket was fired, but instead of going aloft it went off at an angle in the direction of the shore. Something was wrong with the apparatus, and Gruff chuckled with delight.

"That's how they keeps things aboard their vessels," he said. "He's getting a little ahead of us, sir."

"The beast looks like the ghost of a vessel breathing fire," said Bertie.

It was an apt simile, for the *La Plata* had hidden her lights, and apart from the glow of the funnel, loomed up darkly on the sea. Lyon steered away a point to the south.

"Keep her out, sir," suggested Gruff. "We shall want plenty of sea-room before long."

"I'm thinking of going astern of her," replied Lyon. "It will take a little time for her to wear round, especially if she goes on with increasing steam, as I fancy she is doing."

"That's not a bad move, sir. Try it."

Lyon put up the helm and wore round to the stern of the *La Plata*. The manœuvre was not anticipated by its captain. The gunboat forged on at an increasing pace for the length of a cable or so. Then a hasty command rang clearly on the air, and her engines slackened. Lyon steered still further south, and speedily put a full furlong between the vessels.

The night was very dark. During the past half hour the stars had been gradually shut out by gathering clouds. There was no moon. Shorewards were glimmering lights, like diamond dots on a wall of black marble. To seaward all was a blank.

"We've got the full benefit of the wind," said Gruff. "Good old *Iris*! She is romping along as if she knew what is wanted of her."

Boom!

A gun was fired. Gruff burst into a fit of laughter that he immediately suppressed.

"Pardon me, sir," he said, "but that 'ere gun is loaded on the starboard side. Hear 'em! They are now busy with the guns to larboard. Fancy their only having one side ready for action. It is just like these half-and-half sailors. They never reckoned on your move astern."

No notice being taken of the first gun, the *La Plata*, having wore round, fired another. All the deck lights of the *Iris* were hidden. Suddenly Bertie thought of the cabin below. There the lights were still burning. He darted down the companion-way and extinguished them. The *Iris*, but for her white canvas, would now have been invisible to the *La Plata's* men.

"For once, sir," said Gruff, "I wish we carried the dirty sails of a coasting collier. Then they would have to join in a game of blind-man's-buff."

The second gun from the gunboat did no harm. The shot flew away across the bows of the *Iris* with a clear gap between it and the gallant little craft of more than a hundred yards. It was a race between canvas and steam, one vessel handled well, the other in a blundering fashion.

The engines of the *La Plata* were old, and that was a saving clause. Another thing in favour of the *Iris* was that the pursuer's engineers were none of the best, and her captain more uniform than anything

else. "The cricketer's name for a man of his stamp is 'Mister More-flannel-than-cricket,'" said Gruff.

This was apparent from the flurried way he was heard giving orders, interlarded with language more powerful than courteous.

The *Iris* with her narrow bow cut the water like a knife. Comparatively she lay low in the water. A third shot was fired, and this went astern. A profound silence was maintained on board the yacht. In a grim way the men enjoyed the run as they stood at their respective posts ready to obey orders. Gruff leaned over the stern and calculated the movements of the *La Plata* by the glow of her funnel. It was the sole guide to her position.

Higher rose the wind, and the swish of the increasing waves across the bows of the yacht sounded musically in the ears of the men. She heeled over almost to her beam-ends.

"We must take in a bit of sail, sir," said Gruff softly.

The word was passed, and the topmen were aloft in a trice. The topsail vanished as if blown away to sea. The yacht steadied, and losing a little of her speed, swept onward.

Another gun was fired, but what became of the shot nobody knew. Immediately after it there was a shouting on board the *La Plata*. It speedily softened and died away. The glow of the funnel decreased in size, as if the gunboat were receding. A light broke in upon Ralph.

"Her engines have broken down," he said.

It seemed that he had hit upon the truth, for with amazing rapidity the faint red light that had hitherto marked her whereabouts, sank down to nothing but a feeble speck. How the men of the *Iris* could have cheered; but there were the guns still to be reckoned with, and they were discreetly dumb.

The danger was really over, for the present anyway, and only the precise course to be taken required consideration. Lyon was for keeping in the more direct route, straight in a line for cape St. Antonio, but Gruff advised getting well out to sea.

"We are going to have some dirty weather," he declared, "and we can't have too much water round us."

His advice had never been otherwise than good, and the *Iris* was steered on a south-easterly course. The wind increased, and a reef in the mainsail was taken in. In an hour a gale was raging, and under storm-canvas the *Iris* finally pursued her way.

It was sailing through a darkness that was terrible, but with a good watch kept, and their lights again burning, they had little to fear. The *Iris* had been built for long cruises, and was more than a pleasure craft. Everything about her was modern and of the best.

Shortly after midnight it began to rain, not in a feeble, drizzling way, but coming down in sheets. Waterproof attire was donned, and all but Ralph and

Lyon and the men of the middle watch were sent below.

It rained and blew until the morning. The sea ran, in a nautical sense, mountains high, as if resolute not to be softened even when the wind fell away for a while. But only to renew its fury before noon.

They passed a huge liner, going through the waves like a big plough in a field of sandy soil. There were a few passengers on deck, who raised their hats by way of salute to the little vessel that danced like a cork upon the angry sea. The men cheered and waved their stocking-caps in reply. Then the liner went on its stately way, and once more the *Iris* was alone on the foam-crested waves, with no boundary to the sea but the cloud-burdened sky.

CHAPTER XIII.

FOUR MONTHS LATER.

OF all that happened to the *Iris* during the next four months we can record but little. It was a perilous, daring thing to venture upon, but she had safely accomplished the voyage round Cape Horn, and was near the region where Guido Castella had said they must look for the *Daphne*.

Of Ralph Brooking it may be said that he never once wavered in his belief that he would recover the yacht that vanished in the night at Little Crampton. It was a sort of blind faith in the working out of a pure earthly matter. But it must be confessed that in this faith he stood almost alone.

As the *Iris* got further and further from home, Lyon and the rest realized what a wild errand they had come upon. But they were comforted by the knowledge that the original object of the sailing of the *Iris* had been attained—the indisposition of Carrie was a thing of the past. She was the picture of perfect health, a woman whose cheeks had the

bloom of the peach, and her eyes shone with the happiness created by the conviction that she was fully restored to health.

They had much to recall in connection with the long journey. First, the rough, forbidding land of Patagonia as shown by its coast; and then the brief stay at the Falkland Isles, where they met with some cheery naval officers, who wondered what on earth they were doing in that region, but were too well bred to inquire. Of Gruff, Blower, and the men there were made inquiries by others of their class; but the rack would hardly have screwed any information out of them, so loyal were they to their leaders.

Then who could forget those wild, forbidding people, the Fuegians, floating about on their crude timber rafts, with scarce a rag of clothing about them, ignoring the bitter cold, and seemingly insensible to all things but an animal knowledge that they must eat to live?

At night the voyagers saw these most desolate people by their fires on the shore, lighted for cooking purposes more than for warmth, and Gruff told stories of them, truer than most sailor yarns: of their ferocity, merciless cruelty, and total indifference to all appeals to their better nature—if they possessed such a thing.

“You had better take your chance of living safe in a jungle full of wild beasts than trust yourself to the Fuegians,” said Gruff.

But they had no intention of trusting themselves to the Fuegians or any other race of savages. When one of the rafts fearlessly allowed the yacht, under easy sail, to come close to it, Carrie, in pity of the savages, desired some old clothing to be tossed down to them. By way of acknowledging the kindness, the Fuegians returned a shower of pointed stones—rough, jagged pieces of rock and granite, with their naturally injurious powers artfully improved upon by crude grinding.

There were quite thirty Fuegians on the raft—men, women, and children—and all, down to a wee mite of a thing, joined in the ungrateful act, each according to his strength.

"They knows nobody will take the trouble to injure 'em," said Gruff, "and that is what makes 'em bold. They are artful enough for that."

Then there were times when the *Iris* dropped anchor in some lonely, convenient spot, where the shore was well wooded, water could be obtained, and fruit and wild hogs, descendants of those happy pigs which good old Captain Cook turned loose here and there for the use of future generations of settlers, were easily obtained.

Fruits abounded—immense quantities of prickly pear, pine-apple, nuts of various sorts, each in its appointed latitude, rotting away year after year. It seemed to be a terrible pity, when they thought of the scarcity of wholesome fruit among the poor at home.

The *Iris* touched at Valparaiso and bought a quantity of necessities—needles, twine, additional earthenware to replace the broken things, flour for making bread and biscuits, fresh coffee, tea, and so on.

And here they were at last at their destination, about a hundred miles south of Santa Barbara, in a little bay imperfectly sheltered from the boundless expanse of ocean to the west.

There were no signs of the vanished yacht, and Ralph, the only disappointed person on board, made no reference to it. The shore was a sandy beach with a fringe of rocks, and beyond that a wood.

They lay there resting for seven days after their voyaging, content to breathe the sweet air and enjoy the calm that lay upon land and sea, as if they had found the abode of perfect peace.

Small parties of the men went ashore and scouted around. They reported that there was no indication of the presence of man. Rocks and hills lay away to the north, and in the east there were cloud-like mountain tops which were reckoned to be a portion of the spurs of the Andes.

In the wood they met with a species of rabbit, a giant kind of hare, some deer, and a wild boar that showed fight and had to be killed.

"It's the place to be wrecked in," said Blower, who was one of the shore visitors; "Robinson Crusoe's island was nothing to it."

"There is no hurry in returning, is there?" said

Carrie one night as they sat on deck after dinner, with the quiet stars overhead and the softly heaving sea just lapping the sides of the yacht.

"We ought to be on the way back by the end of May," said Lyon, glancing at Ralph, who was in a thoughtful mood.

"I want a little fun ashore," said Bertie. "It wouldn't take the men long to run up a shanty so that we could live there—if only for a week or two."

"I like that notion," said Carrie.

"It can easily be carried out," said Lyon smiling, "if Ralph doesn't object."

"Object to what?" asked Ralph quickly, as he raised his head.

"To a spell ashore—in a hut. The men can build one in two days."

"I should like it, Lyon. I was dreaming of the *Daphne* last night. It rather worries me to remember that she seemed to be in mourning. I'm afraid she's gone to the bottom of the sea."

"You believe in dreams?" said Carrie smiling.

"No—not exactly, in the ordinary sense; but you can't get away from the records of dreams that have had a meaning in them."

"I'll arrange for starting building a hut tomorrow," said Lyon. "We'll make it in a stockade form to suit the taste of Bertie, who is longing to be in peril of his life from savages."

"I am prepared to stand the racket alone," replied Bertie, with his back very straight; "don't risk your precious lives to oblige me, please."

"Would you like to have a month ashore alone?" suggested Lyon gravely; "it would be a very useful experience for reflection in the future."

"And reconcile him to the restrictions of a civilized life," added Ralph.

"And let him understand the difficulties of darning and mending his linen," added Carrie.

"Chaff away," said Bertie; "it amuses you without doing me any material damage. I don't remember talking much about living alone anywhere, but I'm ready to try it and see if it suits me. Come now."

Bertie's neck feathers were a little ruffled, but he was too good-natured to remain long indignant. He went away to talk to Blower, with whom he was on very friendly terms.

Blower was possessed of certain gifts that were cramped by a sea life. He could make all sorts of little things out of nothing, as it were. Give him a few sheets of cartridge paper, and he would fold them in such a way that they could be turned into fans, railway bridges, tunnels, Chinese lamps, and many other devices. With short pieces of stick he made money boxes without lock or key, and yet so arranged that only those in the secret could separate them unless by the exercise of unwarrantable violence. Blower's money boxes were especially adapted to the

requirements of youth, whose saving fits are intermittent, alternating with a burning desire to get rid of the accumulations with the least possible delay.

He who puts the money in could take it out, and thereby ward off the feeling of having hopelessly sunk his money, common to the majority of young people who put their savings in boxes of ordinary construction.

As a carpenter, Blower was a handy man, and this gift had certainly been of use on board the *Iris*. He could mend chairs, and make them if required, after designs and by a method of his own it is true, but though distinctly amateurish—for Blower had never served an hour of apprenticeship—they were strong and serviceable.

During the long voyage Bertie talked much with Blower about the lives of men who had been wrecked, or been famous as pioneers of civilization. Fact was blended with fiction without a doubt, but all the world knows that the facts of heroic adventure and endurance are far more wonderful than the narratives of fiction.

Blower was also impressionable, and he believed in Bertie. He would not have hesitated a moment in setting out with him to explore any land under the sun. In his heart quite a boy in many respects, he looked upon the rosy side of the stories he listened to. That there could be a meagre, a sordid spirit-and-body-grinding side to the lot of men cast away

on lonely islands, or who set out as pioneers into the wilderness, never entered his head.

Bertie told him of the proposed arrangement to spend some time ashore, and Blower rose to the occasion. He got all his tools together, and undertook the making of the fittings of the house, if others looked to the building of it.

The next morning there was an excursion ashore. Gruff remained in charge of the *Iris*, and the Lyster brothers and sister, with Ralph, Blower, and ten of the men, were landed. As a precautionary measure, the men all carried arms, and Bertie, with a rifle on his shoulder, walked with the light, airy step of one who was like the undying hero, Robinson Crusoe, "monarch of all he surveyed."

CHAPTER XIV.

A SPECK ON THE OCEAN.

THE spot chosen for the building of the house was on a small plateau of loamy soil on the summit of the rocky ground. It was chosen for three reasons: it would be in sight of the yacht, the soil was suitable for easy digging, and it was within a short distance of the wood.

Though there was no real apprehension of the appearance of hostile natives, it was deemed advisable for some sort of look-out to be kept. Two patrols were considered sufficient, and the men were appointed to take that duty in turn. Bertie was, by his special desire, appointed captain of this department.

Wild flowers abounded on the border of the wood; some were of rare magnificence, and in gathering them Carrie found occupation; while Ralph and Lyon took off their coats and lent a hand in felling trees, and sawing them up into planks and logs of suitable lengths.

Bertie made a semi-circuitous journey around, penetrating into the wood, and with his gun providing welcome additions to the larder in the way of small game. For five days this sort of life was enjoyed, and a long, one-storied wooden hut, with a stockade at a convenient distance from it, was rapidly nearing completion.

As for Blower, he worked early and late, and his furniture, if it lacked the finish of modern manufacturing, was declared to be all that human heart could desire—in that region.

Paint was voted to be an unnecessary extravagance, but smoothed with sand-paper, and well rubbed with boiled linseed oil, his handiwork was very pleasing to the eye, and Blower was more than repaid when Carrie declared she would take the things home and be proud to have them in her special room.

All this was very charming and conducive to a happy frame of mind; but even as a calm too often precedes a storm, so did those reposeful days usher in the stormy time impending.

It was on the sixth morning that the promise of a livelier and more dangerous time was given through a discovery by Bertie. He started in a northerly direction with his patrol, keeping along the beach for about five miles, and then striking across to the wood, that ran the whole distance in one unbroken line of magnificent trees, far away until it was lost in the distance.

Bertie as a small boy had been fond of climbing. Hitherto, since they landed, he had not indulged in his taste for that pastime. The sight of a splendid tree, species unknown to him, standing out from its fellows like a sentry on duty, put it into his head that a bit of climbing would be a very agreeable change to the endless perambulating to and fro.

The trunk of the tree was straight. What deviation there might be from the perpendicular was not clearly perceptible to the eye. There were branches at convenient distances for scaling its enormous height—the men judged it was fully one hundred and fifty feet high—and the view from the summit was very extensive.

Bertie had never before scaled a tree of that magnitude, nor anything approaching it, but without any sense of nervousness he climbed almost to the top, and gazed upon the wide spread of sea.

To all appearance no vessel was in sight save the *Iris*, that lay in the south, a child's toy to the eye. On shore he saw his friends moving about, mere ants. The only one to be distinguished was Carrie, and he recognized her by the white dress she wore.

Turning his eyes northward, his vision ranged on and on, until a small black speck in what appeared to be an almost land-locked bay, attracted his attention. It was so small that he was doubtful of its being anything tangible. It might have been the shadow of a cloud that was sailing aloft. But it did not shift,

and as he looked keenly and steadily he became convinced it was a vessel of some sort lying at anchor.

Could it be the *Daphne*?

He had almost forgotten her—the object of their coming, too—during the days ashore. What if it should prove to be her? His heart warmed at the thought. He experienced all the joy of the discoverer who, for the first time, espies a long-sought land on the horizon.

Perched on a branch of the tree, he thought over what he should do. The vessel, if it should indeed be one, was miles away, and by going on he ran the risk of being discovered by those on board. Bertie was not afraid, but he was not rash either. Ordinary risk he did not mind, but to put his life needlessly in peril was far from his thoughts.

Again, if he went back and gave in a report of his discovery, it ought not to be so framed as to raise false hopes in Ralph's breast. That would not do, and Bertie resolved to say nothing, until he had verified his belief that he, and he alone, had found the *Daphne*.

From his train of thought he was roused by one of the men shouting. He looked down, and saw that both were staring upward and beckoning for him to descend. He slipped off the branch, and nimble as a squirrel joined them below.

"We were afraid you had the climber's fright," said he who had shouted.

"What is that, Jones?" inquired Bertie.

"Men have got up great heights right enough, sir," answered Jones, "and then lost their nerve. I've seen a man took with the fright when he first went aloft. He's got to be roused from it, or there's only one end to it—he soon comes toppling down."

"So you shouted to rouse me?"

"Not exactly, sir. If you hadn't looked at us, which you wouldn't have done if you had the fright, we was coming up after you. A bit of shaking is wanted with the fright."

Bertie thanked them, but assured them he had not lost his head for a moment. Then he turned into the wood and made one of his usual rounds ere he went back to his friends. The roof of the house had just been finished, and was being critically examined and highly approved of.

CHAPTER XV.

BLOWER BRINGS IN A DISAPPOINTING REPORT.

RALPH stood a little apart from the rest. There was a smile upon his face, evidently forced. Bertie saw it, and thought that he understood what it meant. He glided up and stood by his side.

"Looks uncommonly nice," he said.

"Oh, yes, it's nice enough," replied Ralph dryly.

"You think it a waste of time."

"Well, Bertie, I am somewhat hipped this morning, I suppose, but I shall be better by-and-by."

"Thinking of the *Daphne*?"

"I shall let her go. Lyon has been very frank with me this morning. He says it is like looking for a needle in a pottle of hay."

"So it may be. But if the needle is in the pottle it ought to be found."

"Well said, Bertie," cried Ralph, giving him a clap on the shoulder.

"And you and I will find it," Bertie whispered.

Ralph smiled again. He was amused by the tone

of Bertie, who spoke confidently, as if he had but just to look around and find the yacht.

"My dear boy," he said, "if we can find the *Daphne* without spoiling the enjoyment of others, well and good. But I am not going to make it the great desideratum here any more. Lyon has no hope, and is satisfied now that the voyage has restored dear Carrie to health. I need not tell you how delighted I am. Let the *Daphne* go. It is a loss, but not utter ruin. I was too keen on seeking it at first, but it was owing to the intense dislike I have to be robbed by anybody, especially one whom I trusted. Santioff is a scoundrel, and as such I should like to bring him to punishment; but my desire must not be made the means of destroying the comfort and happiness of you all."

The gloom that lay like a shadow on Ralph's face when Bertie came up, disappeared. He walked into the hut where Blower was busy putting things in order, under the directions of Carrie. The arrangements were few and simple and soon completed.

Bertie signalled to Blower that he desired to speak to him, and shortly after went outside. Blower soon followed him.

"I've made a discovery," said Bertie, looking cautiously around; "what do you think it is?"

"A wasps' nest," replied Blower, after a moment's thought.

"Well, it may be that," said Bertie, laughing. "Do you believe we shall find the *Daphne*?"

"No, sir, I *don't*, and that's flat."

"You think she is lost?"

"She was never brought here. It was all a yarn of that lying Spaniard. You wouldn't expect to get the truth from a foreigner, would you?"

"Why not?"

"Because he *is* a foreigner," said Blower, in a tone of conviction. "They can't speak the truth. Look at the time we was at war with the Roosians. I was but a boy myself, but I've heard old Ben Stark speak of it. We licked 'em every time, and yet they claimed the wictory. The French says they won at Waterloo!"

"I never heard that," said Bertie. "But let us return to the *Daphne*. I think she's here."

Blower gazed about him in stupid amazement. Bertie gave him a gentle push.

"Not here, close to us, but say about twelve miles up the coast. That is as near as I can guess."

He told Blower about the black speck he had seen, and gave him his reasons for not making the discovery public. Last of all he asked Blower if he would know the *Daphne* when he saw her.

"Couldn't mistake her," said Blower.

"Then run over and have a look at this craft," said Bertie; "only, mind this, you are not to be seen unless it should prove to be a friendly vessel. I couldn't go without being missed; but I was thinking that if you went away in the night, and got a glimpse

of her early in the morning, you could be back by eight o'clock. It's a tough job to set you, Blower, but I know you don't mind doing anything for me."

"Consider it done," said Blower. "I'm used to spending nights out by the sea."

"There's a beach the whole way," said Bertie.

Before night set in the house was ready for occupation. On the morrow the stockade would be finished. There was a sleeping-room for Carrie and for Lyon. Bertie and Ralph's hammocks were swung in an adjoining apartment of larger size. Half a dozen of the men camped in a tent outside.

It was a very still night, absolutely no air, and the sky was bright with stars. It may be heresy to say so, but I may here declare that the far more beautiful portion of the heavens is to be seen in our northern hemisphere. The much-vaunted Southern Cross is certainly beautiful, but it is not equal to many clusters of far-off luminaries, radiant suns of other planetary systems, we can look upon at home when the air is clear. Still it was beautiful, and the reposeful feeling in that quiet spot which all felt softened their voices to a murmur as they sat or lounged about in the open air.

Blower was gone, but he was not missed. On board the *Iris* it was believed that he was ashore; and those on land, if they thought of him at all, were under the impression he had returned to the yacht. Bertie alone knew what had become of him.

It was late when Gruff unexpectedly came ashore. He found the occupants of the house outside, lounging in chairs made by Blower, as easy to sit in as they were undoubtedly crude and ugly. He had no notion of beautifying a thing, but he knew what was requisite to meet the requirements of the human frame.

"The barometer's gone down as low as it can do, sir," he said.

"The *Iris* is all right, isn't she?" said Lyon.

"All depends where the blow comes from, sir," returned Gruff. "We mayn't get it at all, but be in what the scientific parties call the centre of the disturbance. Then we shall have it as calm as it is now right through. But if it comes on to a tremendous blow from the west, as it does occasionally in this latitude, I hope we've good anchor-ground."

"Do you propose anything?"

"I'd like to take the *Iris* out and stand off and on if there was any wind, but there isn't. We can do nothing but bend another cable and lower an extra anchor. I thought I'd speak to you first, sir."

"Exercise your judgment in everything, Gruff," said Lyon.

When Gruff was gone, Carrie remarked upon the anxiety of the boatswain. She believed he had something on his mind which he had made no reference to, something he desired to keep from them.

"He's over-anxious," said Lyon, yawning. "Sup-

pose we get to bed. It was a wise man who first advocated the early business."

Bertie was soon asleep, but he was awake before the day had fully returned. Thoughts of Blower flashed upon him, and slipping quietly out of his hammock he dressed and went outside.

Blower had returned already, and was lying by the entrance to the men's tent smoking his pipe, apparently none the worse of his long journey.

The men slept soundly, but Blower spoke in a whisper when he gave in his report:—

"You can make your mind easy, Mister Bertie. It isn't the *Daphne*, but a black-looking thing, a piratical boat, I should say, named the *Nugget*."

It was disappointing. Bertie felt it keenly, but he endeavoured to make light of it.

"Can't be helped, Blower," he said; "it *might* have been the *Daphne*, you know. Did you get a peep at any of the men."

"I got there in the evening," answered Blower, "just before dark, making an earlier business of it than you arranged. I could see from my spy place on the rocks she had a lot of men, twenty or more, moving about her deck. That goes against her being the *Daphne*, which sailed with half that crew. They seemed to be a rough lot. Her name is painted on her bow in big white letters. I waited till after dark and saw the cabins lit up. They made an awful row, as if drinking and roughly enjoying themselves.

Once there was a fight, and a pistol fired, but it was soon stopped. There's a bad lot on board that *Nugget*."

"So I should suppose," said Bertie miserably.

"There's been the firing of big guns out at sea in the night," resumed Blower; "but it must have been a terrible way off."

"What guns?"

"I don't know, Mister Bertie, but I heerd them just as we used at home when the soldiers was out autumn manceuvring. I've heerd 'em fifteen mile off on land. You may hear them fifty at sea, I should say. Listen, there's one of 'em."

Bertie heard it, but the sound in his opinion was not that of a gun. It was more like the far-off roar of some huge beast.

"It is very strange," he said.

"Must be some foreigners having a bit of a tussle," suggested Blower. His geographical knowledge was of a most elementary nature. Bertie told him that it was scarcely possible for ships to be fighting at sea in that latitude.

"What is it then?"

"I don't know. Here comes Gruff ashore. Perhaps he will be able to tell us something about it."

CHAPTER XVI.

THE GREAT WAVE.

GRUFF'S face was lined by the furrows of anxiety. He stepped out of the boat that brought him ashore, and saluted Bertie, who went to meet him.

"The captain about, sir?" he asked.

"Not yet; but I can call him if you wish it."

"I think it had better be done, sir. I'll wait for him here."

Lyon soon appeared, hastily clothed. He cast a glance around, and, seeing a perfectly clear sky, wondered why he had been disturbed.

"No sickness aboard, I hope, Gruff?" he said.

"No, sir. But there's something wrong around us," answered Gruff. "I've been on deck all night listening to sounds I've heard once before. Tremendous storms are raging round us."

"We ought to be thankful we are escaping them."

"So far, sir—yes. But I call to mind twenty year ago when I was here, a little lower down, when lying off St. Diego. We heard the big guns then,

booming here and there from every point of the compass, and not a cloud in the sky."

"But something happened. You are hesitating, Gruff. Out with it."

"A great wave they gives the name of tidal to rolled in, just as we were getting thankful to think we had escaped the storms. It swept up from the south-west, and it came on to the shore carrying some of the shipping right into the town, sweeping away the quays and houses, drowning people by the scores—"

"And you fear a tidal wave now?" interposed Lyon.

Ralph had arrived, and the men in the tent were aroused. Gruff had quite a circle of anxious listeners.

"It might or it might not, sir," he said; "but if it comes, where will the *Iris* be? The lives of the men are precious. No good can come of keeping them aboard during the next few hours. If nothing happen afore noon, the danger will be past."

"Let the men come ashore," said Lyon. "Shall we be safe here?"

"No, sir. You must get further inland, or be ready to start on notice of danger. There is no knowing how far a tidal wave will go. It depends on the height of it. Low-lying islands have been swept through and through by 'em. Here the rocks must break it, but the force of a wall of water rushing in must be seen to be believed."

Who that has read at all is in entire ignorance of the awful phenomenon that Gruff dreaded would soon be shown? The devastations reported at intervals from various quarters of the world—China, Japan, among the islands of the Indian Ocean, and elsewhere—are familiar to many of us. What if such a terrible visitation was to fall upon them?

Say that no lives were lost, what would be their fate with the *Iris* wrecked? Turn which way they might vast tracts of land would have to be traversed, lands full of perils imperfectly known, but sure to be realized. To men it would be terrible. But there was Carrie to think of.

She answered for herself, for she had been listening. Her face was quite composed as she emerged from the hut, and there was no faltering in her walk as she approached them.

"Gruff has not raised an alarm without reason," she said. "He would spare us pain if he could; but the truth must be faced. Let us think of the lives of the men first, and the rest afterwards."

"Bravely spoken, miss," said Gruff. "And now you've nothing to learn, I'll be bold enough to say the worst will come. We must take refuge in the wood, with one keeping watch. When the time comes to fly, if fly we must, it will be as well to have as little as possible to carry. Arms and ammunition, I would suggest, sir. With them we shall be safe in a way. There's fruit and herbs to be got, and the

guns will supply the rest. We must make for San Francisco."

"Meanwhile," hinted Carrie, "we are wasting time."

Gruff, with Lyon and Ralph, returned to the yacht. There the men were told they must lower the boats and get ashore. The companion-ways were closed and locked, Gruff keeping one eye on the horizon all the time.

The sound so like the firing of guns, or the roaring of huge beasts, reached them at intervals, and seemingly drew nearer.

The tent was struck and the newly-built hut closed. The door was secured with strong screws, for the wave might come and go without wrecking it. So rapidly was everything done, that within half an hour the entire party was ready to beat a retreat.

"To the wood," was the word. Gruff decided to stay by the shore to sound the note of warning, as he knew the signs of danger well enough to recognize them when afar off. Once seen, he assured them, they could not be forgotten.

"You see a black line along the horizon," he said, "just as if it was drawn with a pencil. It gets thicker and deeper as it comes along. Then you see it is white on the top, as if a bit of tape lay there. On it comes until you see it is a wall of water, marching in as steadily as a long line of soldiers, only more terrible than any army ever was to look at. It strikes the shore with a sound that deafens; blinds

you with a mortal fear ; you breathe a prayer and run for your life, if the Almighty gives you the strength. But some poor creatures, such as I saw, just drop on the ground, and the water falls on 'em and smashes the lives out of their helpless bodies."

The men were already on the way to the wood with their leaders and Carrie. It was Bertie who lingered to listen to the picture of the rush of the tidal wave. He was fascinated, spell-bound by it, and would have remained, but Gruff would not have it.

"Go on, dear lad," he said ; "nothing will happen to me, but you may lose your nerve."

The voice of Lyon calling to Bertie added force to this request, and he followed his friends. The wood was reached, and there he turned to look back across the sea. Far away lay the horizon, acutely defined.

Was this the dreaded "pencil-line" Gruff spoke of ? He shivered, and felt a weakening at the knees. But he shook it off, glanced at the retreating forms of his friends, and swarmed up the trunk of a stout ash tree. Settling down in the fork made by two branches, half way up, he remained to witness the grand phenomenon. His daring action was not observed. Gruff was looking seaward, Lyon and the others had gone on. Once more he heard his name shouted, but refused to answer.

"I'll not lose the sight of it," he muttered, with his teeth set together.

Not a breath of wind. The sun was just above the wood tops, shining brilliantly; the leaves on the trees hung listlessly; not a cloud was in the sky. A man heedlessly walking on the beach would have feared no ill, but basked complacently in the warmth of the morning. The *Iris* lay at her moorings, a thing of beauty on the calm sea of the little bay, with her bare poles and hull reflected in the still depths.

On came the destructive wall of water—stately, majestic, strong to destroy, with nothing to check it. Bertie saw the white line, the even stretch of foam breaking off the wave, appear and become defined. Still no sound broke the awful stillness. Gruff, on the highest available ground, stood like a figure of stone.

Presently the great wave was but a furlong from the shore. Then he turned and ran, to halt and face about when he had gained the wood. The wave struck some point jutting out from the shore, and gave the keynote to all the awful music that was to follow.

Gruff seemingly could bear no more. The burnt child dreads the fire, and he who has experienced the terrible moods of the elements fears them most. He fled into the wood, shouting to those ahead to hurry onward.

Bertie wished he had not been so rash, but he ground his teeth and clung with all his might to his resting place. Across the mouth of the open bay stretched the wall of water.

One moment of suspense, and then the thunderous roar upon the beach deafened him. The blindness, offspring of terror, of which Gruff had spoken, threatened him. He saw all things as through a veil of muslin.

The water in the bay leapt upward, as if some inconceivably gigantic fountain had begun to play. The spray rose to a terrible height, and hid the *Iris*, raised high from its anchorage, from view.

A cry rose to the lips of the boy and changed to a groan. Suddenly beneath him he saw the water wildly eddying around, as if he had been carried into the thick of a whirlpool. He beheld trees lean over and fall, washed out of the shallow soil in which they grew, felt that the one he was upon was going, and cried out for mercy, as if he had a human foe to hear him. But he still clung to his post with arms and knees, his body soaked with spray, half stunned by the awful noises below, expecting each moment to fall, but resolved to fight for his life to the last.



'He can't live, he can't die either, he's dying inside!'



CHAPTER XVII.

THE FATE OF THE "IRIS."

"**R**UN!" cried Gruff, as he dashed up at a rate of speed which, considering his weight and years, bordered on the marvellous.

"Where is Bertie?" asked Carrie.

"I sent him along, miss."

"But he is not here."

Blank were the faces when the absence of the boy was made apparent. Blower did not hesitate a moment, but darted off back towards the sea. Lyon and Ralph sped after him. Gruff stopped Carrie and the men who would have followed their example.

"You can't do no good," he said.

The roar of the wave striking the shore boomed in their ears, and the faces of the strongest men turned pale.

"It's in!" groaned Gruff.

The sound of the mighty crash upon the shore ceased, and the three men who had darted off to find Bertie were seen hurrying back, fighting with the

water that seethed around them. It was above their knees, and struck the trunks of the trees with a failing force, but with sufficient power to throw the spray twenty feet into the air.

The panic that ensued was natural enough, but it did not last. The great wave had done its worst, its power was spent, and already it was receding. The salt water spread around, gathered about the feet of the men, bubbled and wound about them, but failed to rise higher.

"It's done with!" shouted Gruff, and in his strong arms he caught Carrie as she reeled and would have fallen.

The soft, sandy soil soaked up the water. It vanished with incredible swiftness, and by the time Ralph had come up, pretty well exhausted with his fight with the head of the in-rushing wave, the ground was little worse than a beach when the tide is out.

Carrie rallied, and bade them think of Bertie. The men, with recovered nerve, went back to find him, Gruff leading the way. They met him ere they had gone far, walking with his hands in his pockets towards them, assuming a coolness that was entirely confined to outward appearances.

"Rather a big thing in waves," he said.

"What have you been doing with yourself?" demanded Gruff wrathfully, "putting us all into a quandary of fear. Look at Blower, crying like a child."

"It's the salt spray in my eyes," cried Blower, brushing his hand across them; "but I'm glad to see him. I thought you was drowned, Mister Bertie."

"It was a near thing," said Bertie more gravely, "and I'm thankful indeed that I've escaped. I climbed a tree, and it came down—not so soon though as some of them, but I got a very nice wetting." They could see now that he was in a soaked condition. "The house we built isn't gone."

"That's something to be thankful for," muttered the men.

"It's pretty damp inside though, I reckon," said Bertie; "as for the odd timber about the ground outside, that's gone back to the place from whence it came—into the wood. The *Iris* is as safe as she can be—ashore. She's lying on her side upon the rocks, with her masts pointing to the house at an angle of forty-five. She's not much use now. We can't live in her, and she'll never be got afloat again."

Gruff bade him go on and relieve the anxiety of his friends, and with the men hastened over the wet ground to where the *Iris* lay.

It was a sight that moved them to their heart's core. Lifted by the huge wave, the beautiful vessel had been carried ashore and thrown with tremendous force upon the rocks, where she lay with her masts loosened, and pointing, as Bertie said, at the house recently erected.

The building had escaped destruction, owing to its being on the higher ground, and in a way shielded by the pile of timber intended for the stockade.

"To think," said Gruff, hoarse with emotion, "that this good little craft should bring us so far, to lay her bones here."

"I suppose there is no chance of getting her afloat again, sir?" said Blower.

"Not an atom," said Gruff. "Look at her. What machinery have we to move anything of her weight? We can't dig under her and let the water in so as to form a dock, for the soil is too sandy. And if we did make a dock, she wouldn't be afloat long, for her timbers are sprung all through, and she'd have fifty leaks, any one of which would keep the pumps going. No, my lads, she's got home, and will never float again."

It was a sorrowful conclusion to come to, but it was the correct one. They could all see that. The doors of the companion-ways had been burst open by the force of the shock, the shattered locks twisted and torn away. Everything movable on deck by ordinary means had vanished. As a wreck there was nothing more to be done, unless it was to remove the contents of the hold and cabins, and break her up.

"Well, my lads," said Gruff, "matters are bad, but we might have suffered more. In a way we've everything left. We are a fairish lot of strong

men, and we can take care that no harm comes to Miss Lyster, while we can raise a hand to defend her."

"Which we may have to do," said Blower, "unless a lot of rascals I know of have been drowned."

"What's that?" demanded Gruff.

Blower having gone so far, told of the discovery of the *Nugget*, and his opinion of her crew. He described her position, and Gruff was of opinion that the tidal wave had not wrecked her.

"The land that shuts in the bay would break the force of it. But we'll take stock of the lot afore we run any risk of meeting them. It may be they have only put in for water. But for a spell I don't see there is any need of worrying the captain or Mister Brooking about them. We all want a few hours to get our nerve again."

So everybody came back, and all their stores being intact there was no immediate hurry for departure. But it was a mournful spectacle presented by the *Iris*, lying like some shapely monster on the hard rocks. They penetrated to the cabins and found everything in a state of chaos—the furniture tumbled about or heaped up in confusion, and the vast majority of things breakable smashed to pieces. Not a single mirror was left intact.

Of her boats, two remained. The davits were broken, and the small craft had been jerked several yards away, and were lying upside down on the

higher ground. The men righted them, and Gruff examined the timbers, reporting eventually that they were seaworthy. But as it was their ultimate intention to travel overland, they would only be useful for fishing in the bay during their stay.

The newly-built house was found to have suffered little. The water had forced a way under the door and through the unglazed windows; but the mischief done was nominal, and before night set in occupation was resumed.

The men fixed up tents in which to pass the night. Gruff, true to the arrangement he had made, held his peace respecting the existence, if it had escaped the tidal wave, of the dark-hulled vessel in the distant land-locked bay.

CHAPTER XVIII.

FINDING A STRANGER.

EXCITEMENT is exhausting, and all the men slept soundly. It was at a comparatively late hour that Gruff turned out of his tent, and found Lyon and Ralph standing by the *Iris*, regarding her as people look upon the ruin of a thing they love. As the majority of men love a dog, so does the yachtsman love his yacht. They learn to look upon her almost as a living thing, and a misfortune to their vessel is on a level with a disaster suffered by a friend.

Having expressed his own feelings at the loss of the *Iris*, Gruff took the favourable opportunity to speak about the *Nugget*. He explained how it had been discovered, and the reasons for which it had been kept a secret.

"You see, gentlemen," he said, "Mister Bertie was disappointed. He hoped it was the *Daphne*, and he wanted to have the whole credit of the find; and I thought it would be as well not to worry you with it yesterday."

"What is there to worry about?" Ralph wanted to know.

"All sorts of queer craft are in this latitude," said Gruff. "The old-fashioned pirate is mostly done with, but there are more ways than one of killing a pig, as the saying goes, and lots of vessels are still lost, leaving no record of what has become of them."

"Of what nationality are the queer vessels?" asked Lyon.

"Mixed," said Gruff; "some are mere ocean tramps, American built, and manned with the scum of California. Others hail from the ports of Chili or Peru. They make an honest living if they can, but they mix their dealings."

The desirability of ascertaining the nature of the *Nugget* was apparent. It might prove to be friendly, but the possibility of its being otherwise could not be ignored. The question was, what was the plan to be adopted?

Finally, it was decided practically to repeat the journey performed by Blower, and under the same conditions as to the hour of departure and return. He would act as the guide, and the party was to consist of half a dozen at the most.

Ralph was eager to go, and Lyon yielded to his wish. Not knowing what contingency might arise, it was also arranged to hurry on with the stockade, and transfer all the ammunition and arms from the *Iris* to it.

Thus a busy day was arranged for, and when all were risen the work of erecting the stockade went briskly on. It was constructed with a gateway in front and a small means of exit in the rear. Both were fitted with plain, strong wooden bars, that could be fixed and removed with ease and in a moment or two.

"We may be taking all this trouble for nothing," said Carrie.

"One never can tell," said Lyon.

Bertie wished to join the night expedition. He claimed it as his right, pointing out that but for him they would never have known of the existence of the *Nugget*, "until it was too late."

"If her crew is dangerous," he said, "they might have found us out and taken it into their heads to attack us. They would have come upon us unawares. If it is a friendly vessel, we should have lost the chance of being taken away in her. You never thought of that, any of you."

No great amount of objection to his going was expressed, and his claim to the honour of discovery of the craft was admitted to be a just one. He was satisfied, and looked forward to the coming night with the expectant joy of an adventure-loving youth. The party proposed to go well armed, and fifty rounds of rifle ammunition were served out to each man, in addition to a small quantity for their revolvers.

Before sunset the scattered timber fashioned for the

stockade was gathered together and fixed. Strengthening inside shores were made from some of the straight-trunked trees that had been washed out of the ground by the tidal wave, cut into suitable lengths. It was crude work, but very strong. Lyon looked to everything, for although he talked as if they were but working to amuse themselves, inwardly he was very anxious.

We all know what presentiments are. Whether there is anything in them or not, we are unable at all times to treat them with contempt. Lyon had a dim belief that the labour would not be thrown away.

There would be no moon until twelve o'clock, and it was as dark as it would be that night by nine o'clock. The stars gave sufficient light for the small party that set out to see if the *Nugget* was still in the land-locked bay. Across the wide spread of sea there was the shimmering of a phosphorescent glow, common in the warmer latitudes.

It is caused by an incalculable number of animalcules floating on the surface of the waves, giving out light as the glowworm does. It is a beautiful phenomenon, and that night it served the purpose of acutely dividing the sea from the shore.

But the latter had changed its aspect since the terrible commotion of the previous day. Masses of shingle were piled up here and there, great rocks had been washed from their beds and carried higher up

the beach, and prodigious masses of seaweed barred their way.

It was evident that the full force of the in-rushing wave had not been realized in the region of the stockade. Nor did its centre of force seem to be in a northern direction; for after arduously climbing over the heaps of shingle and struggling through the masses of seaweed for about three miles, the aspect of the beach became better, gradually diminishing its chaotic appearance, and finally resuming its normal, placid level.

By the time this change had been wrought on the scene, they were within two miles of their destination, somewhat weary with their exertions, but not by any means disposed to give up or even take a rest. The moon had risen, but was not yet visible, save in her light seen above the dark outline of the wooded inland.

But with the moon in the sky, seen or not, the general light is increased and the gloom proportionately diminished. Objects could be seen at a greater distance, and Ralph, who had permitted a little occasional talking on the way, now commanded all to be silent.

They kept as close to the rocky ground as possible, and when the moon rose above the tree tops they had here and there to cross strips of silvery light, thrown through openings in the higher ground. Finally the moon was high enough to flood the beach

and render all further attempts to proceed in the shadow impossible.

Ralph softly called upon them to halt while he decided on the course to pursue. By climbing up the rocks they could go on by way of the borders of the wood. But there the ground was rough, and thorny shrubs and creepers grew in profusion. It would be slow travelling at the best.

The beach, on the other hand, was here remarkably smooth. It was of sand, and as level as a lawn. Its width had materially increased, and if there was such a thing as a watcher anywhere near, they could not traverse it and escape detection.

Before Ralph could decide what to do, an exclamation from Bertie aroused him from his train of thought. The boy was looking along the beach, and his hand pointing towards a figure in the far distance.

At first it was difficult to define its exact form. It was moving towards them, occasionally bobbing up and down in a very extraordinary way. But presently it took human form, and the strange motion was accounted for by the discovery that whoever it was stopped now and then to pick up something from the sands.

It was a man, and so ludicrously like one of the ordinary wanderers on a beach at home looking for shells, and stones, and other common objects of the sea-shore, that Ralph for a moment was disposed to laugh. But he checked the rising feeling, and motioning for

his followers to keep still, waited for a nearer view of the stranger.

He proved to be a man dressed in nautical attire, such as mates of inferior merchantmen adopt—a pea-jacket, loose trousers, and a cap with faded gold lace around it. Something seemed to be the matter with one of his legs, for he walked with a limp.

“Why, that’s old Sam Mutton,” said one of the men breathlessly. He was one of the fishermen who had been chosen, when making additions to the crew of the *Iris*.

Ralph dimly remembered the name of Mutton, associated in some way with Little Crampton, but how any person belonging to that seaside resort could have arrived here was a mystery. The whole thing partook of the elements of a dream.

“You must be mistaken, Barnes,” said Ralph.

“Not a bit of it, unless I’ve gone wrong in my head,” replied Barnes; “it’s old Mutton, or his ghost.”

The prevailing belief was that it was the spectre of the said Mutton, and the men showed a disposition to beat a retreat; but the bright moonlight gave a solidity to the form of the man, who was now within fifty yards of them, and a very natural movement on his part gave him a further air of reality. He stooped to pick up something that stung or pricked him, and he thrust his finger into his mouth, uttering an angry exclamation.

“Mutton, right enough,” said Barnes. — “Hallo there! How are you, Sammy?”

The man lifted his head, showing an alarmed face,

naturally long and peculiar in its features. His eyes were close and deep set, his nose a mere button in shape, and a drawn-down mouth of horse-shoe form gave him a dissatisfied expression, common among people who take life hardly.

"It's me, Sammy. Don't you know Barnes?"

To all appearance Sam Mutton did not recognize Barnes, nor was he capable of recognizing any one. He seemed to be stunned, as Barnes rushed up and grasped his hand. Accepting the presence of Mutton straying on the beach as a promise of security from foes, they all came out from the shadow of the rocks and surrounded him.

"Pull yourself together, Sammy," said Barnes; "it's a surprise, I know, but you have given us a staggerer too. How came you here?"

Mutton looked at the speaker, and then in turns slowly surveyed the others. Gradually the light of reason, and the power to give an account of himself, came back to him.

"I came here," he said, "in a yacht."

"Not the *Daphne*, surely?" exclaimed Ralph, the light of a possibility breaking in upon him.

"That was her name when she started," said Mutton, "but she's changed it. She's changed her colour too. Everything's changed except her captain, and he's as bad as ever."

"What's the *Daphne's* name now?" asked Ralph. "Speak up quickly."

"The *Nugget*," said Mutton; "and if ever there was a hell afloat, she's one. I've cut and run. I left her this morning, and I've had nothing to eat but shell-fish I've picked up from the shore; but I'm not going back any more."

"Come aside here," said Ralph, "I must have a talk with you. Would there be a chance of getting possession of the *Daphne* to night?"

"Who are you?" asked Mutton.

"The owner of her. She was stolen from me as she lay in Little Crampton harbour."

"The liar and scoundrel," said Mutton; "he told me he'd bought her of you. Get her back? Not unless you've five times the men I see here, and then it isn't a dead-sure thing."

Ralph took him by the arm, and led him back into the shadow of a high cluster of rocks. More clearly than ever he saw the need for the greatest caution to be exercised.

"Can we talk here in safety?" he asked.

"I should say so, sir," replied Mutton; "they ain't, as far as I know, prowling around here. What do you want to do?"

"To have a talk with you first, and act as expediency dictates afterwards," said Ralph.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE STORY OF THE "DAPHNE."

"**H**OW did I come on board the *Daphne*?" said Mutton, as he sat down with an expectant circle of listeners around him, some standing, others sitting; "a more natural question than that couldn't be asked. I'm no seaman; never went two miles from the shore, until that day when I took on with that Spaniard who calls himself Captain Santioff. My walk of life was sweets, on a tray, hawked in the streets and on the beach, as this young gentleman will call to mind."

The young gentleman appealed to was Bertie. He knew Mutton well enough, but evaded the implication of an intimate acquaintance by saying, "I think I remember you."

"You ought to," said Mutton meaningly; "I'm one of the chief characters of Little Crampton, and I sell sweets in a nautical get-up, because the visitors like it. You must be saltily inclined in all walks of life if you live in a seaside town and wish to prosper."

"The *Daphne*," said Ralph, with imperfectly restrained impatience, "let me know about her."

"Certainly, sir," replied Mutton. "This Santioff is a Spaniard who thinks he's no end of a swell, and he must have a servant, and, to my sorrow, he fixed on me. 'Come aboard the *Daphne*,' says he to me, on the very night he cleared out of the harbour, 'I've something to say to you.' He'd spoken to me before, bought sweets of me, which you may hardly credit, but the ways and tastes of these foreigners is peculiar."

"So I goes on board, and he was friendly, quite chummy, and asks me to have something to drink. I tells him I don't take anything strong, ever since I broke my leg through falling off a ladder when the worse for it. It's quite enough to lose one leg," and Mutton held up his right one showing that he had a wooden leg, hidden as far as possible by the broad trousers, "from which I limps. It's a mark on me not easily wiped out. Well, I don't drink; and he laughs, as if amused. 'Anyways,' he says, 'you are going with me; I want a walet,' and I was kept down below till we got out to sea."

Mutton spoke rapidly, and he paused for breath. Ralph urged him to hasten on to the present position of the *Daphne*.

"I'm coming to it," he said. "What a dog's life I've had! Most men treat the meanest cur better than Santioff's treated me. He's stuck up, over-

bearing, and violent. You've got to fly when he opens his mouth. All the old oiliness has gone out of him. He's a brute, a ruffian, and a bully. We never touched at but one place all the way here. He come to it as straight as most people go from one town to another. The *Daphne*, I forgot to tell you, had been painted rough as we crossed the Atlantic, and her name changed. At Monte Video, the place I mentioned our having stopped at, they seemed suspicious of us, and we did not stay long.

"Arrived in that bay yonder, Santioff went ashore with two of his men, and was away three days. He came back with a long Yankee chap in his company, of the name of Towner Wickram. They had met and put their heads together to find out something, and they drank early and late for a day or two, vowing eternal friendship for each other; but I've no faith in it."

"When was this?" asked Ralph.

"As near as I can remember," replied Mutton, "three weeks ago. But I've been so bandied about, worked to death, kicked, cuffed, and swore at, that I've lost count of time."

"Whatever they looked for," resumed Mutton after a pause, "they've *found*. It's uncommon heavy, and it's in boxes knocked together rough by themselves. I've heerd the word 'gold' mentioned more than once, but I couldn't stay there from choice for a shipload of it. What with their language, their habits, and

the danger of being shot or stabbed at any moment, no offered price would tempt me to go back, now that I've got away."

"How did you escape?" inquired Bertie.

"I was sent ashore to meet that Yankee, who'd been up the country. I was to have been his servant for a bit, as if one master wasn't enough for me. But I didn't wait for him. As soon as the boat that brought me ashore turned back, I popped into the wood and hid there until it was dark. I'd have stopped there longer if I hadn't been afraid of wild animals, and haven't so much as a pocket-knife to defend myself."

Sam Mutton had finished his story. It was a startling one, for it showed that the *Daphne* and the *Nugget* were one, and that Santioff had succeeded in finding the gold store of the long-dead and almost forgotten Sutter the Swiss.

Guido Castella did not lie. Why then had he not come with the *Iris* to reap the reward of his revelation? Ralph was convinced that it was not drink alone that held him back, now that he knew all. What was his motive?

At present it seemed there was no likelihood of the *Daphne* departing. But some scheme must be rapidly devised and carried out if she was to be recovered.

He had no suspicion of the terrible truth that the arrival of the *Iris* was known to the Yankee, Towner Wickram, and that a strong party of ruffians under

his command was making a circuitous journey to obtain sight of her, in ignorance of the mishap that had befallen the yacht.

But, unaware of the peril of his friends, Ralph decided on a leisurely return after the men had had an hour's rest.

The assurance of Mutton that no attempt would be made to track him down, on the grounds that the American would think he had not been sent ashore, and Santioff on board would suppose he was filling his new engagement, was accepted in all faith, and for the next hour the party quietly rested, and then faced about for the stockade.

It was a long tramp, and the rougher portion of the beach again taxed their energies. It wore them out, and they were reduced to crawling along while they had yet two good miles to travel.

The moon lighted them on the way all the night long. There was no wind, and sounds travelled far on the still air. In one of their occasional halts to regain breath Bertie said he heard the noise of firing. But he could not tell the direction from whence it came.

"We can't be going to have another tidal wave," said Blower, shivering at the bare thought of it.

"Hardly possible," said Ralph, "certainly very improbable. Be quiet for a few moments."

They stood still with their ears stretched to catch the sound, if it were repeated. A faint rattling was

heard as of troops irregularly firing. They looked at each other, and when Ralph asked, "Where does it come from?" there was a general pointing in the direction of the stockade.

"Something is wrong there," said Bertie.

"Hurry up, my lads," said Ralph; "we may be wanted. Fall in close, and keep your eyes open."

They forgot their recent fatigue—it vanished as if it had never existed—and at a swift pace they strode on.

Again and again they heard the sound of rifle firing, and each time it was more distinct. They were approaching the scene of fighting, or whatever it might prove to be. In their hearts they knew there was only one cause for the use of firearms. Sometimes there was a heavy discharge. Then one rifle alone was heard, short and sharp, feeble in comparison, yet with a portentous import, that roused in them fears for the safety of their friends too keen to express in words.

Nearer and nearer. The daylight was coming, and they could see the bay where the *Iris* met with her doom. With set lips they hurried on. Added to the firing there was the shouting of hoarse-voiced men. Ralph called a halt.

"Stay here a few moments," he said.

He climbed up the rocks and disappeared. In grim silence they awaited his return. The report of rifles continued, the shouting never ceased. The few

moments had become twenty minutes, and then Ralph came back to them.

"There is a circle of men round the stockade," he said; "I could not tell their numbers or see them. I judged by the flash of their rifles. They are under cover, like the sharpshooters of an army. As far as I can judge, all our friends are inside; but there they must remain, for to show their heads outside means death."

"What is to be done?" asked Bertie.

"I can't tell," answered Ralph; "we are but a few. Those who have invested the stockade outnumber us. Stratagem is our only chance of giving assistance. Give me time to think."

And he sat down with his head between his hands, weighed down with the hopelessness of the position of affairs.

"All my doing," Bertie heard him softly groan; "why did I not let the *Daphne* go? O Carrie, Carrie!"

"Don't give way," said Bertie, putting his arm about his neck; "whatever happens, nobody will blame you."

CHAPTER XX.

A GALLANT DEFENCE.

THE stockade was invested by Towner Wickram and about forty men. So far that explains the situation ; but let us see how it came about that they were kept at bay.

In the middle of the night Gruff, who was sleeping in one of the rough tents outside the stockade, suddenly awoke. Why he did so he had no idea. In recalling that fact afterwards, he declared that it seemed as if somebody had shaken him violently. But on opening his eyes and asking who it was, he received no reply.

Gruff arose and slipped on the garments he had removed on retiring. Then he went outside and looked around. The moon was shining, and he could see about him with tolerable distinctness. A glance to seaward showed nothing there to give rise to apprehension. It was in one of its placid moods. Then he looked along the beach, and again was relieved. But as he turned to the wood, he saw a man come out of it, and look steadily in his direction.

Gruff wasted no time in vain surmises. A man there might mean danger or it might not. He preferred to act on the former possibility. In stentorian tones he called on the men to awake, and they came tumbling out of their tents, hurrying on their clothes, and each with his rifle and cartridge-belt in his hand.

"Inside, lads!" shouted Gruff.

The sharp report of a rifle, fired by the man who had given rise to the alarm, stimulated their movements. The shot, however, did no harm, having been hastily fired.

Gruff, cool and steady, bade the men close the gates and secure them. Lyon came to the door with his rifle ready.

"What's the matter, Gruff?" he asked.

"Strangers, sir," replied Gruff; "I'm thinking of Miss Lyster. Tell her not to be alarmed. It may be only one man."

"I'm not alarmed, Gruff," she answered from within.

She came to the door in a few minutes. The men were posted round the stockade peering through the intersections left by the hurried nature of the work. They reported all clear.

"You may have been hasty, Gruff," suggested Lyon good-humouredly; "possibly our friend was some lone hunter who has lost his way."

"He warn't called on to pop at us, sir," returned

Gruff; "and he wouldn't have done it had he been alone."

"Good reasoning," said Lyon.

Carrie, standing at the door, asked quietly what was to be done.

"You had better keep inside, miss," advised Gruff; "it is the safest place for you."

Carrie retired, and the door was closed. Gruff and Lyon held a rapid consultation. It resulted in their adopting a method to ascertain the strength of the foe.

There were twenty-three of the crew, and Lyon and Gruff brought their strength up to twenty-five. Acting on the whispered instructions of Gruff, half the men, in different places around the stockade, put their caps on the muzzles of their rifles, and gently lifted them above the top of the timber work. Immediately there was firing from every quarter. They were surrounded.

"A good thirty odd guns peppered away then," said Gruff; "not too many for we to tackle outside, if Miss Lyster wasn't here."

"But she is here—unfortunately for her," said Lyon. "Who can these fellows be?"

It was not possible for them to tell. Whoever they were, they had been guilty of an unprovoked attack. The spirit of Lyon was roused.

"There is an auger in the house," he said; "we must pierce the timber for shooting. See that it is done sharply and as quietly as possible."

Gruff fetched the auger, and brought some grease with it. The work of piercing the timbers of the stockade fence he did himself. There was no more firing for a time, but the rustling of men passing about through the bushes in the wood fell clearly upon the ears of the listening men.

The piercing was finished—a hole to each man, and every man in his place. None of the enemy could now approach without being seen, and in peril of being shot down.

“It is fortunate we housed the ammunition,” said Lyon; “but in the matter of provisions we are poorly provided. There is not, I fear, more than we shall require during the day.”

“Much may happen in a day, sir,” said Gruff hopefully.

It was true; much might happen either way. Until the strength and precise nature of the enemy could be ascertained, Lyon could not tell what chance he had of holding out.

If in sufficient force, and endowed with the requisite courage, they could storm the stockade and carry it. The timber defence was but eight feet high, and a moderately active man could easily surmount it. Lives would be lost, but numbers in the end must prevail.

Lyon was a splendid shot, but unfortunately the majority of the men were not expert in the use of firearms. An object of any size within fifty yards

they could hit, but beyond that distance the result of their aim would be very doubtful.

The silence was not broken by the foe for a while. They were still around. The men reported they could see them in the wood, moving from one tree to another. Eventually the reason for this movement was made apparent. Some of them had climbed into the trees, and from their point of vantage opened fire on the defenders.

It was returned, and one of the foe came tumbling down from his post. Two of Lyon's men received superficial wounds from bullets grazing them. The fall of the man from the tree brought him into view as he lay still upon the ground with the moonlight falling on him. He was a tall, powerfully-built, roughly-dressed miner. His boots and clothes were deeply stained with mud and clay.

A voice shouted to the defenders, "Stockaders, ahoy!"

No answer being given, the speaker proclaimed his identity, and sounded a note of warning.

"My name is Towner Wickram, and I'm a fearless son of the west. I've got five hundred men at my back, and your one chance of life is to give yourselves up. Who are you, and what do you want in this region?"

Again no answer was vouchsafed him, and the firing was resumed. Lyon commanded his men to spare their ammunition for the present. Presently

some of the foe became bolder, and advanced into the open.

"Wait," said Lyon, "until more show themselves."

He judged they would do so, if not immediately fired upon, thinking that there was a lack of ammunition in the stockade. This is what they evidently did, for they came out one by one and ranged themselves in an open line. A tall man, wearing a very broad-brimmed slouch hat and the digger's boots and breeches, put himself at their head.

"Take the place, boys!" he shouted.

From every hole on that side of the stockade poured the fire of a rifle. The aim for the most part was defective, but two of the foe bit the dust. The rest reached the stockade and scrambled up. As their heads appeared, they were met with a perfect fusilade and driven back, leaving three more of their band on the ground.

With all haste they retreated to the cover of the wood, and for a time Lyon and his friends were at peace.

"Gruff," he said, "Mr. Brooking and those with him ought to be warned against the peril of returning. Whom can we send?"

"What's to become of 'em, sir," asked Gruff; "wouldn't they have a chance of joining us?"

"To what purpose, Gruff? In a few hours, if that gang doesn't beat a retreat, we shall have to go out and meet them."

"We are ready, sir, in a way, but"—Gruff turned his eyes toward the house where Carrie was—"we must, as men, think of Miss Lyster."

"Gruff," said Lyon, "there's one thing to be done. The *Iris* lies below, those fellows are in the wood above, there are two boats on the shore, and the gig could be easily launched—"

"I grasp it, sir," said Gruff: "you go with the young lady. Me and the rest will stay here until you are safe away. If you pull the boat round to the north you are less likely to be seen. The hull of the poor old *Iris* will cover you. Take as many men as you want, sir."

"Five will suffice," said Lyon; "pick them out while I speak to Miss Lyster."

In a few minutes he returned with her. At first she was unwilling to go and leave the men; but Lyon pointed out to her that it was for her sake they had shut themselves in, and, freed of the responsibility of her presence, they would be able with more confidence to engage their foes.

No further movement indicated the position of the enemy, but the utmost caution was necessary as the bar of the lower gate was taken out and the gate opened wide enough to let the party pass through.

The five men selected went down the rocks to the beach. They walked with their shoes in their hands, and made no sound. Under the shadow of the *Iris* lay the two boats that had escaped destruction. Five

men, with the assistance of Lyon, sufficed to lift one fairly into the water, so as to avoid the grinding of her keel upon the beach. Stealthily they took their seats, and Lyon waded out with Carrie in his arms and placed her in the stern. Then he himself climbed in. The ready men had meanwhile muffled the rowlocks with their handkerchiefs.

The risk of detection was now reduced to a minimum, until the boat was well out at sea. Then, of course, it might be seen. Lyon trusted it would be observed by Ralph, so that they might be together again, and devise some plan to assist the men in the stockade to escape from the peril that surrounded them.

He glanced at the sky eastward and saw that day was at hand. Its coming had its advantages and its dangers—both friend and foe might espy him.

To keep afloat without provisions, or even water, was impossible. He could not go very far without putting back to the shore. But he had got Carrie away from the stockade, and hoped for the best.

Once more the firing was renewed. He looked astern, but the boat having passed the point of the bay he could see nothing.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE SIEGE RAISED.

"BOYS," said Towner Wickram, "I guess there's nothing for it but to sit down and wait. That lot shut in there durstn't come out, and they'll stay till provisions run short. Then they'll come sneaking into the open, and we can pot 'em as we please."

"Why shoot 'em at all?" asked one of his followers, who was leaning thoughtfully on his rifle, a man of middle life. He was tough of body, inured to life's hardships, but he had a soft spot remaining in his heart. "They didn't interfere with us."

"But they would have done, Jorkins," said Wickram; "we can't run the risk of strangers hanging around."

"They were wrecked here," said Jorkins; "there's the ship below to prove it. They didn't come after us, I reckon."

"It don't matter," said Wickram doggedly; "they are here, and that is sufficient. There's enough

and more than enough of us to share the big find as it is."

The other men listened, and said nothing. They stood in a group near the edge of the wood, with one of their number in advance with his eyes on the silent stockade. It was plain by the look of the faces of the main body that they sided with their leader. The find, as he called it, was a big one, but there was already a sufficient number to take a share in it.

"If they'd come a week later," said Wickram, "it wouldn't have mattered. By that time we should have got the rest of the stuff aboard. The cave old Sutter closed up so artfully would have been emptied."

"It's as good as empty now," said Jorkins.

"What do you mean by that?"

"There was two piles of boxes, wasn't there?" said Jorkins—"one on each side of the cave. We found the job of moving one lot heavy enough; the next wouldn't have troubled us."

"Why not?"

"Because they are empty."

This startling statement seemed almost to petrify the men. They stared at the unmoved Jorkins with fixed eyes. Towner Wickram left off chewing the chunk of tobacco in his mouth and frowned heavily upon him.

"It's a fact," said Jorkins serenely. "I see that Santioff, a day or two ago, prodding among the back

lot, and I guessed what he was doing of—he was testing 'em. I tested 'em afterwards: they sounded like so many drums. There's nothing in 'em. I reckon that Sutter got the chests there first with the intention of filling the lot, but hadn't time to do it. I believe they stopped him midway in the job, by hanging or shooting him. It don't matter which it was; they did for him."

The frown on the brow of Wickram deepened. He turned to the men and addressed them collectively:—

"It was I who found the papers that gave me a clue to Sutter's store. Santioff and I are old friends, and I wrote to him asking what he thought of it. It might have been nothing more than a yarn. Santioff wrote back to me arranging a scheme for us to meet over yonder. I was to come on foot, and he would bring a yacht to carry the gold away to a country where no questions would be asked. According to Jorkins, he's got the whole lot on board. What do you make of that?"

The men looked at each other, but said nothing.

"When I heard of the party yonder being on the coast," resumed Wickram, "it was Santioff who said, 'Go and wipe 'em out.' He gave me reasons for it, which I thought reasonable. He proposed to stay on board with his own men, guarding the treasure. I'm a man who speaks plain, and I say this looks as if he meant to play us false."

Low murmurs of assent arose. Angry gestures

marked the feeling that was aroused. Towner Wickram stood up and tightened his belt, like a man about to start in a race.

"I give the word," he said: "hurry back sharp, and see if he means playing us false. Perhaps he hoped we might be wiped out. Anyways, we've lost a good life or two."

He turned to lead the way, and the men fell in behind him with lengthened faces. Some were disposed to revile Jorkins for not having spoken before and told all he knew; but he bade them be quiet, and as he was a resolute man, given at times to fighting on the smallest provocation if he felt he was insulted or wronged, they let him alone.

Confident in the occupants of the stockade being shut in, Wickram proceeded through the wood a short distance inland parallel to the shore. But already Gruff had brought out his men, and the noise made by the retreat of the gang reached him. He pressed forward, and a volley made the enemy aware of his vicinity.

Taken by surprise, Wickram and his followers staggered back, wildly returning the fire. The shots flew in every direction; but Gruff, taking his bearings, kept his men under cover of the trunks of the trees, and again they played havoc among their foes with their steady firing.

With a loss of a third of his force the Yankee fled. He and his men plunged into the depths of the wood,

whither it would have been unwise to follow them. Gruff, in a state of elation, called on his men to give three cheers. To their astonishment they were answered from a short distance down the beach. Turning their eyes in that direction, they saw Ralph and his party hurrying towards them.

In the first flush of meeting and greeting, Mutton was not observed, nor did Ralph think to comment on the absence of Lyon and Carrie. Soon the eyes of Gruff, suffering from a sudden and violent extension, betrayed the fact that he had seen Santioff's valet.

"He was taken away in the *Daphne*," said Bertie, explaining things; "and the *Daphne* and the *Nugget* are one."

"Wonders will never cease," gasped Gruff; "as things have turned out it's a pity Miss Carrie and Mister Lyon went away—"

"What's that?" sharply demanded Ralph.

Gruff told him of the departure of the gig, and a hurried glance was cast by all towards the sea, hoping to see the little boat. But it had disappeared.

"It was a mistake," said Ralph. "Did you notice which way they went?"

"Mister Lyon would naterally bear north, and he can't be far away. The boat isn't found in the commonest necessaries. He's put in to lie close through the day somewheres."

"With five men only, and they may fall in with that rascally crew you've just scattered."

It had been fine up to that time. The sun rose in a sky as clear as crystal, but now a haze suddenly appeared, sweeping down from the sea. It speedily surrounded them, shutting out the view.

"They are safe enough now till it lifts," said Gruff; "you are worn out, sir. Get a bit of sleep."

Ralph could but obey him. He and those who had been with him throughout the night were weary, and they sought a much-needed few hours' rest.

Meanwhile Towner Wickram and his followers had been overtaken by the mist, that enveloped the wood in its cloudy folds. Some were for halting, but the majority urged the necessity of putting as much ground as possible between them and the sturdy fellows who had wrought so much mischief among them, and their leader being eager also to get on to verify or relieve his fears about the *Daphne*, they pursued their course, with the inevitable result—they lost their way.

There is much truth in the assertion that a man walking in the dark on level ground is prone to travel in a circle. Darkness and mist are twin sources of error to travellers, and the Yankee and his men insensibly bore round to the right until, without knowing it, they had their backs to the sea.

Wickram had an idea he was out of his course. There was something in the wood, little as they could see of it, very different from the wood they journeyed through on the way to the stockade. The trees

were of bigger proportions and stood wider apart. The undergrowth had also entirely vanished.

"This is a collection of giant Californian pines," he said, "and we've never been here before. Jorkins, you are an old wood craftsman. Can you help us to get back to the right way?"

"No," said Jorkins; "I could only make a guess of it, and guesses in such a time as this are generally wrong."

"What's to be done, then?"

"Wait."

"But these mists sometimes last for days," chorussed the men.

"I know it," said the unruffled Jorkins; "but as a rule they lift in a few hours. But if you go on, you may get into the grizzly country. The bears are fairly plentiful between here and the Andes."

Of all animals dreaded by the miners of the west the grizzly stands out well to the front. The enormous strength of that monarch of bears, his readiness to attack man, the difficulty of killing him, all conduce towards making him a creature to be feared and avoided. Whatever might be the time necessary to wait for the rising of the mist, it would be preferable to rushing, as it were, blindfolded into the claws of the terrible grizzly.

They squatted on the ground, clustered together and smoking their pipes, talking little, for the next two hours. The mist had not risen or lessened, but

deepened, and a darkness, almost equal to that of night, lay around them.

Wickram fumed and cursed, as is the manner of his kind when the dispensations of nature fail to be in harmony with their wishes ; but, as if in mockery of him, the mist deepened and deepened until he could not see his hand held within a foot of his nose.

It was then that, with the perversity of a self-willed man, he decided to go on alone and risk where he went to. His followers declined to accompany him, and, having bestowed a few hard words and left-handed compliments upon them, he started on his way.

"The chances are," said Jorkins, "that he will never more be seen alive."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE RATTLE OF A CHAIN.

IT was not Lyon's intention to go far away, but, unfortunately, he had passed Ralph's party on the beach unseen, and, not perceiving them, confined his attention to looking out for a suitable place in which to hide the boat and leave Carrie in safety until he knew what had happened after he left the stockade.

Coming to a narrow strip of the beach, where the rocks ran down close to the sea and overhung in places so as to form shallow caves, he decided that this was the place for his purpose. He steered in, and the cutter was carried up to a spot on the beach where she could be stowed away out of sight of any one not in the immediate neighbourhood. Then he crept out into the open and listened. The rattle of firearms in the distance assured him that fighting was renewed. Then after a while he heard the British cheer that broke from the yachtsmen when the foe retreated. Lyon's face glowed with delight. He understood the portent of the sound.

"They've licked the rascals, Carrie," he said; "but in case some of them may retreat in this direction, we will lie close for a while."

Presently, finding that there was no further disturbance, he elected to return; but ere the boat could be launched, the mist swept up and hid both land and sea. Sheltered by the rocks, they were comparatively free of its damp and chilly influence, but outside there was a risk in travelling. On land they might unexpectedly come across some of the enemy; and at sea, with the outgoing tide, they ran the risk of being carried they knew not whither. With the coming of the mist there was a light wind, but it was slowly dying away.

Everything was still—so quiet that the breathing of the men as they lay upon the sands was an important factor in their surroundings. There was the faint swish of the retreating sea, but that hardly counted. There was no talking, and the minds of all were busy with thinking of those they had recently parted from, and Ralph and Bertie, who had yet to be accounted for.

From wondering what had become of them, Lyon was aroused by a creaking sound, seemingly not far away. He fancied he heard a footstep, too, but was not certain. Of a surety he heard the voice of a man speaking in muffled tones.

Sounds, under the conditions around him, could not fail to be more or less deceptive. He believed both

the creaking and the voice came from somewhere on the beach. The former was continuous for a while, then suddenly ceased. The wind also had fallen quite away, and the quietude was deep and profound.

"Did you hear anything?" asked Lyon in a whisper.

Carrie was asked the question, but one of the men, believing they were addressed collectively, answered,—

"I heard some creaking, sir—ship's cordage or a chain I took it to be. Might be both."

"I fancy you are mistaken," said Lyon; "there is no vessel near us."

"He is right," said Carrie quietly; "I know the sounds. You have but a poor ear for music, but you ought to recognize the crude melody of a moving vessel at sea."

Lyon made no answer. The sounds were inexplicable to him. But again the voice was heard, and now it sounded familiar to his ear. This time it was nearer, too, but he failed to catch what was said.

Immediately afterwards the rattle of a heavy chain sounded loud and clear. It lasted but a few moments, and then the oppressive silence was resumed.

"You know that rattle, sir?" said the man who had spoken before.

"It can't be the chain of a ship's anchor," said Lyon.

"It's that and nothing else, sir. She's dropped her anchor within two furlongs from the shore. She

must have come along uncommonly close to a bit of a promontory ahead, or we should have seen her. Whoever is in command can't be in his senses not to have stood off a mile or two, for the wind was westerly. But he's shown himself not to be all fool by dropping his anchor."

"Bring the cutter down," said Lyon, rising from the sands; "it may be a friendly vessel. In any case I should like to know what she is. You had better come with us, Carrie."

"I am as well here," she answered. "Give me your revolver. I can fire it as a signal if you are very long away."

Lyon left three of the men with her and took the other two with him. They were absent for half an hour, a time of keen anxiety to Carrie, for during the lagging minutes she heard nothing to indicate the whereabouts of the cutter.

The boat Lyon left down by the sea, a little lower than its original landing-place. Advancing with the caution of one playing blind-man's-buff, he spoke in a low tone at intervals, and judged her whereabouts by the soft answer she eventually gave in return.

"I have made a queer discovery, unless I have been dreaming," he said.

"Mermaids disporting themselves in the ocean, perhaps," suggested Carrie lightly.

"No, it is a yacht lying out there—the *Daphne*."

"Impossible!"

"I couldn't see her, but it *is* the *Daphne*. I heard the voice of Santioff as he talked to some man about the misery of the wind having fallen."

"My dear Lyon, you *must* have been mistaken."

"I was not. The voice of that scoundrel once heard is not to be forgotten, whether I have an ear for music or not."

"Don't indulge in sarcasm, Lyon. It is out of your line."

"Well, I won't, Carrie; but, seriously, it is the *Daphne*, and she's so short-handed that they can hardly work her. I heard Santioff express a fear they would never get round the Cape, if ever they reached it. Now I've been wondering—"

"If you could board her single-handed and recover her for Ralph?"

"Not exactly. I've five men, and Santioff spoke of having but seven left. Surely we are a match for them. We could steal under the stern, climb on board, shout as if we were fifty instead of a tenth of that number, drive them below, fasten down the hatches, and—and wait for the fog to rise. Then, of course, we could signal to our friends on shore, and with the longboat they could come to us."

"It is a nice little programme, Lyon," said Carrie, "if you can only carry it out."

"I would try, but for one thing."

"You are thinking of me?"

"Indeed I am."

"I am a woman," said Carrie, "and not one who wishes to interfere with the prerogatives of man, especially in connection with the army or navy, but I can make myself useful, if only to hold on with the boat-hook when we reach the yacht."

"Promise me one thing, Carrie, that you will, if we are overpowered, pull back to the shore. You can use a pair of sculls fairly well."

"I promise you that much, Lyon. What good could a poor, weak woman like me do? But you won't fail, I am sure of it, unless it is not the *Daphne*."

"You think I have been the victim of fancy," said Lyon; "but my brain never was clearer. If it is not the *Daphne*, it was the voice of Santioff I heard, and anyway I mean to try to get hold of *him*."

CHAPTER XXIII.

A HAZARDOUS ENTERPRISE.

THE attempt to board the *Daphne* was undoubtedly hazardous to a degree. It was adverse to the prudent movement that had been taken for Carrie's sake; but Lyon, who possessed the gift of rapidly reviewing things and coming to a decision, resolved to risk it, as there was so much to be gained.

He was certain it was the *Daphne*, but how she had so mysteriously arrived in that region bordered on the incomprehensible. As yet he was unaware of the discovery made through the agency of Sam Mutton that the *Daphne* and the *Nugget* were the same, nor did he for a moment associate the two names together.

But here was the *Daphne*, possibly to be recovered by one bold movement. If successful, he would not only regain the vessel lost by Ralph, but provide the means for their getting back to the old country. Without some such assistance, their chance of doing so was rather remote.

It needed very few words to inspire the five men with him with his spirit of determination to do or suffer defeat, or it might be death, in the attempt.

"We'll go where you go, sir," they said.

They pulled out slowly and cautiously, Lyon steering and keeping as near as he could guess in a direct line for the spot where the *Daphne* lay at anchor. The chances that he would keep a straight course were very much against him, but he hoped that some occasional sound on the deck of the yacht would be a guide to him. He scarcely understood why everything should be so quiet there, and charged it to the men being below to avoid the inconvenience of the damp mist.

The real cause was that Santioff had, as Towner Wickram feared, stolen away with the prize, and being as he knew near the spot to which he had dispatched his too confiding associate, he saw the wisdom of being quiet so as to conceal his position.

The wind, coming from the west at the outset, had compelled him to steal along the coast; when it fell he was forced to lower the anchor. The firing of the rifles reached him, so that he knew there had been a fight. Provided Wickram had been victorious, it would be as well to give him time to return to the bay and there discover he had been betrayed. Ignorant of the course the *Daphne* had taken, he might hurry on to San Francisco, only to realize the completeness of the treachery of which he was the victim.

Moreover, the *Daphne* lay inconveniently close to the shore, and, her presence suspected, the astute Yankee might find some means of reaching her ere Santioff could raise the anchor and depart.

The action of Santioff and the neighbourhood of the yacht are thus accounted for. Lyon, of course, had no inkling of the truth. He could only realize that the vanished yacht was near, and wonder how it came about.

In silence the boat progressed for a while. Then a soft word from Lyon checked the oarsmen. He feared they had passed her, and it was the case. He had steered too much to the right, and was a furlong too far out to sea.

As the men rested on their oars, the sharp ring of steel falling on wood broke the stillness. It guided Lyon to the position of the yacht, for he knew that the sound was caused by something being dropped upon the *Daphne's* deck. It was evident that all of her crew were not below, and the utmost caution was necessary if he was to succeed in approaching and boarding her ere his coming was suspected.

"Back starboard, pull larboard," he softly whispered, and the boat swung round. This time he made no mistake in the steering, for as the boat slowly slipped over the quiet sea, the dark outline of the vessel's hull suddenly loomed up, like a washed-out drawing in Indian ink, a few yards to the right.

The slightest of exclamations sufficed to check the

rowers. Lyon steered round, and the boat glided under the overhanging stern. Carrie, with the boat-hook inserted in the loop of a rope hanging over, steadied it.

No further orders were necessary. Lyon stood up, and seizing the overhanging rope, tested it and found it would bear him. He climbed up, and the men one by one followed him, holding their very breath.

There was something ghostly and unnatural in the whole thing. Carrie was in a state of suppressed excitement that was almost unendurable. Woman-like she felt inclined to scream. It is the safety-valve of her sex when emotion attains a point dangerous and leading to a hysterical outburst or fainting fit.

She lost her head for a moment, and may be forgiven for it. Though endowed with much courage, she was not a masculine woman. There was a limit to her powers of endurance, and the hand that grasped the boat-hook relaxed its hold, the grip on the rope weakened, and the tide swung the boat clear of the yacht.

She instantly realized what had happened, and her coolness returned. The strain upon her was terrible, and the action of sitting down and groping for the oars was mainly mechanical.

As she lifted one into the rowlocks the silence on board the *Daphne* was broken. Fierce cries disturbed the misty air, and the trampling of feet, as men struggled together, accompanied the more pro-

nounced sounds, like some subdued bass accompaniment to a burst of weird, terror-inspiring music.

Carrie was appalled. Visions of Lyon in the hands of his enemies, stabbed or shot, dead or dying, uprose before her. His command that she should, in case of failure, make for the shore was forgotten, and she frantically endeavoured to pull back. But the tide was too strong for her, enfeebled by hours of excitement, and she was borne further and further away.

The riot of fighting soon ceased. Lyon had succeeded or failed. She knew not which, and, the horrors of uncertainty assailing her, she yielded to overpowering emotion and fainted away.

CHAPTER XXIV.

RESCUED.

IT was about this time that the tide was expected to turn. They were waiting for it down by the stockade, and Gruff assured them that the fog might then be expected to disperse. If it failed to do so, its duration would be a matter of great uncertainty.

"There's no wind, sir," he said to Ralph, "and that is against its going; but you never can tell how things work in the Pacific."

The time crawled, or seemed to do so, but the moment came when the great bed of waters hung on the balance prior to setting shoreward again. Then the fog rose up straight into the air and rapidly formed itself into clouds with patches of blue between. It was a wonderful sight, but there was little time to admire it.

A quick scouting around assured them that their enemies had departed. All that remained lay dead. The sandy ground offered facilities for quick inter-

ment, and, guided by a respect for the fallen, though they were the bodies of foes, Ralph set the men to work scooping out shallow graves for them.

While they were thus engaged, he looked up the binoculars that, with a few other effects, had been brought to the stockade from the *Iris*. With them he scanned the shore first, and saw nothing of his absent friends. The *Daphne* was but a few miles away, but she was close in, and a bend in the coast hid her from view.

With no special hope of seeing anything seaward, he turned the glasses in that direction. It is a thing one instinctively does when idling on the coast, and just then he was waiting for the men to finish their task. As he swept the binoculars round, a speck rapidly crossed them. He brought them back, found it again, and discovered it was a woman in a boat, miles away at sea, and too far off for him to recognize it was Carrie.

But he could see that she was rowing with the feeble action of one exhausted. It was some hapless creature in need of rescue, and there was the longboat available. The announcement of his discovery was received at first with incredulity, but Bertie and Gruff, having each in turn taken a look at the distant boat, confirmed his story.

All else was forgotten for the time. There was a rush for the longboat, and she was launched as if shot from a gun. Ralph and Bertie jumped into the stern,

a dozen men seized the oars, and away they went, pulling for dear life.

Ralph steered. Bertie with the binoculars kept watch upon the woman in the boat. He soon recognized who it was, and burst out with the information breathlessly.

"It is Carrie, and she's alone!" he said.

"Carrie?" was all Ralph could say.

He soon had ocular proof of it. Carrie it was, with her wits recovered, but in imminent danger of losing them again. When the longboat glided up, and Ralph leaped into the cutter and threw his arms about her, she burst into weeping, then laughed wildly, and clung to his neck, unable to give him a word of explanation.

He lifted her tenderly into the longboat, and the cutter was taken in tow.

"Pull back smartly, men," he said.

They had the tide in their favour, and the boat dashed towards the shore. Carrie sat beside Ralph, with her head upon his shoulder, and he supporting her, while Bertie steered. She said nothing, but looked at one and the other with a vacant expression in her face. Her hands were hot to feverishness.

"What can have happened?" muttered Ralph. It was not a question put to Carrie, but she must have dimly understood it.

"Over there—the fight," she said. But when he asked her meaning she did not answer him, but closed her eyes and softly moaned.

The boat gained the shore. By that time Carrie was talking, but it was the wildest nonsense to the listeners, a jumble of the sea and mist and fighting men. They could make nothing of it.

"We must get her to her room in the house," said Ralph. "Bertie, you will have to be nurse. Some horrible trial has broken her down."

There were medicine stores in the *Iris*, and when Carrie had been placed upon her couch in the stockade house, Ralph hunted out the quinine and gave her some. It had a quieting effect, and she fell asleep.

In the full belief that Lyon and the men were lost—how it was, passed their wits to devise—there was a gloomy gathering outside. They mooned about, talking in a desultory manner, until the day had given way to the evening, and night was at hand. Carrie still slept, and this was a hopeful sign.

The mist was followed by a calm. It was so quiet that night that one could have believed the very earth had stopped in its course, but for the slow shifting of the stars overhead.

"It's a rough place I've brought you to, Bertie," said Ralph with a sad smile; "and I don't see my way out of it."

"We don't see our way very far ahead at any time, you know," replied Bertie; "it's bad, I know, but we must bear it."

"I have no thought of myself," said Ralph wearily, "but of you."

Gruff came up and asked to have a word or two with them. They were seated by the door of the house, so as to hear the slightest call from Carrie.

"Have you any suggestion to make, Gruff?" said Ralph.

"I've been talking to Sam Mutton, and am led to think that, if we made a bold bid for it, we could recover the *Daphne*. She can't get away, and this calm's going to last, or I'm out of my reckoning."

"What is your plan?"

"Mutton says there is always a boat ashore, day and night. We could get hold of it and board her. Half of us would suffice. It's worth the risk."

"Make any arrangements you please," said Ralph; "as you say, it is worth trying. If I could get my yacht again it would be a great thing."

"I'll get her," said Gruff; "we'll be off at once. It's a stiffish march, but we shan't have to walk back."

Again was the long walk to the land-locked bay undertaken. Leaving the stockade closed and guarded, the old boatswain led his followers away. They had the rougher part of the road to travel first, but made light of it, as sailors delight to do. As they approached the region of the bay the glow of a fire on the beach was observed. They crept up, and saw a lone man sitting beside it. Gruff was of opinion he had seen him before. It was Towner Wickram, who had found his way back without his followers, to discover that

his fears created by Jorkins's story of the empty chests were but too well founded.

The *Daphne* was gone, he was swindled and betrayed, and his followers were lost in the woods. But he had hopes that they would find their way back, and the fire was lighted to guide them.

A scheme of revenge was in his mind. He was shaping it when Gruff and his men crept up and surrounded him.

"Keep still," said Gruff, "and don't attempt to use your shooters."

"I'm not a fool," replied the startled Wickram. "It's hands up, of course. I needn't ask who you are."

CHAPTER XXV.

TOWNER WICKRAM'S PLANS.

THE Yankee made no attempt to rise, but motioned for Gruff and the men to sit down beside him. He seemed to be quite reconciled to whatever was in store for him.

"You've tracked me down," he said, "and it's been cleverly done, for I feel as if I'd been wandering a thousand miles before I found my way back here."

"We didn't come for you—precisely," said Gruff; "though I think you are one of the rascals who attacked us last night?"

Wickram nodded in assent. He was quite composed.

"You see," he said, "I was afraid you had come to interfere with me; but I've been fooled. You didn't lose any lives?"

"None."

"Then you've nothing to growl at. Look here. You've got to be reasonable with me. Listen! I was in partnership with a man on a job that promised to be profitable. He says that he'll act on the

square, and I believe him. Not right in my senses to trust him an inch. Well, I hear of you being around. My pardner says, 'Go and clear 'em out. They mean mischief.' I come to clear you out, and get the worst of it. I come back here and find my pardner has shunted with the spoil—shunted with it, ship and golden cargo."

Gruff listened to him with a sinking heart. He understood the purport of the story but too well. The *Daphne* was gone—he was too late! But he sat quietly listening, and the men were equally discreet.

"He must have slipped from out the bay as soon as I started to clear you out," pursued the Yankee; "he couldn't have done it much later, as there hasn't been any wind. It's as still now as if all the world was dead. I've been swindled by the man I trusted, and I want to get at him and spoil his game."

"You can't do it," said Gruff, feeling at the same time his own helplessness.

"I can try—if I get a chance," said Wickram. "Now what are you going to do with me? Is it the rope?"

"No."

"Shooting then?"

"No."

"Then you don't mean to do anything? I'm obliged to you. It gives me the chance of getting at the man who's done me."

"What's his name?" Gruff asked. For the

present he was on the sham-ignorant tack. Wickram evidently did not suspect that the *Iris* had come to find the *Daphne*.

"Does it matter?" said the Yankee. "I think not. Let his name go, as I'm bent on wiping it out. He's got a yacht, and he's grabbed a cargo of the golden dust, and it's that ship and cargo I'm going to get back."

"You've got another ship here, I suppose," said Gruff.

"No; but I can get one. Where? Well, not on this coast, you reckon. But I can hustle back to San Francisco, cross the continent, and down New Orleans way find a dozen men who'll fit out a craft to intercept my pardner in his cockle-shell."

"It will take time."

"Not so long as it will take him to get round the Horn. And he's bound to put into Monte Video as the most convenient port. I'll undertake to be there before him, and lay my life he don't go much further."

Gruff saw no reason why he should object to this programme. Santioff deserved punishment. False to his original trust, and false to the man who helped him, he was bad to the core; and on the principle of allowing dog to eat dog, Gruff decided to let Wickram go where he willed.

But he had no liking for his company, and soon after left him, without having been called upon to give a reason for his being there. Wickram, wrapped

in his own dreams of revenge, had not so much as thought of it.

"I never dreamt I should wish such a scoundrel good luck," said Gruff, as he walked away with his men, "but I do him. I'd rather he had the *Daphne* than Santioff. At the same time, if they get fighting and go down to the bottom of the sea together, I shan't shed many tears."

Gruff thought he had been remarkably astute in permitting Towner Wickram to go. It was a case of vicarious administration of justice in his eyes; but though he knew it not, it was a serious blunder on his part, and fraught with much future trouble.

He was bitterly disappointed. All his schemes of cutting out and recovering the *Daphne* had come to naught. The only satisfactory thought in his mind was in relation to the threatened punishment of Santioff by the Yankee, but that was too uncertain to give him much consolation. Things looked black all round. The outlook was disheartening.

He took his time in returning. There was no need to hurry, and he stopped here and there to rest and have a smoke. The men talked together, but Gruff was as silent as Napoleon is reported to have been in his retreat from Moscow.

Day came when he was but two-thirds on the backward journey. One of the men reported a ship lying ahead, near the shore. Gruff soon saw it in the distance, and knew it by its outline.

"It's the *Daphne*, by all that's wonderful!" he gasped.

He broke into a run and never paused until he got abreast of her.

There she lay, fairly close in, and literally smothered in bunting, as if it had been gala day. A gentle breeze was blowing off the shore.

"He's cheeking us, laughing at us," roared Gruff. "If I'd only known, we could have gone in the longboat and captured her, instead of fooling off yonder."

"They're signalling to us."

"Let 'em signal. They won't get no comfort out of fooling me," grunted Gruff.

He moved on again, walking quickly. Not another word did he say until they came in sight of the stockade. There he saw some of the men busy taking stores out of the *Iris* and stacking them on the beach.

"What's the move now?" Gruff wanted to know. He put the question to nobody in particular, and none of the men answered him.

Again he hurried on. Blower espied him, and came along at a run to meet him.

"Mister Gruff," he said, wild with delight, "we've got the *Daphne* again, and as soon as the wind is strong enough she's coming round here to take aboard the stores of the poor *Iris*."

"Taken—who took her?" exclaimed the amazed Gruff.

"Lots of us were in it. We took her without striking a blow, although we nearly came to fighting."

"Just make things clear to me," said Gruff, sitting down, "or I shall go clean dismantled."

Blower, nothing loth, told the story of the recovery of the *Daphne*. It seemed that shortly after Gruff departed Carrie came to her senses, cleared by a refreshing sleep. She was able to rise and give Bertie and Ralph an account of the boarding of the *Daphne*. What the outcome was she could not tell; but immediately after the facts, as far as she could give them, were known, Ralph manned the longboat and pulled round to where she lay.

They found all quiet until they got alongside. Then they were hailed by the familiar voice of Lyon.

"'Who is it?' I heard him say," said Blower, "just as if he was going to be shot, his voice was that miserable. 'Ralph,' sings out Mister Brooking. 'Don't come here,' says the captain, 'I've murdered my sister Carrie.' Then Mister Brooking bursts out laughing for sheer joy, and climbs on deck, and there was such hand-shaking as you don't see more'n once in a lifetime."

"But the *Daphne*," said Gruff; "how was she took?"

"Our captain boarded her in the mist," said Blower. "Two of the men were on deck; t'others were below, and there they were battened down till a short time ago. The two on deck was Santioff, the scoundrel, and another who ain't of much consequence. They both

got a rough handling, as became the occasion. All but Santioff is to be put ashore, with a fair allowance of stores. The chief villain is to be took home to be tried for his crimes."

"It's very wonderful and pleasing," said Gruff; "but I'm sorry I was out of it, and I've let that party go."

"What party?" asked Blower.

"One of the lot who attacked us t'other night. He talked of doing something—it don't matter what. I'll give you a hand with the unloading, for I wants something to ease my mind, which at this moment is like a kettle just on the bile."

Blower failed to understand his meaning, but he was not curious, and just then there was so much that was pleasant to think of, so if Gruff had anything disagreeable to talk about it would keep.

It kept; for the men had paid little heed to Towner Wickram's threats of vengeance, and Gruff kept his knowledge of it locked in his breast, hoping it would end as it had begun, in empty talk.

"And there are a thousand chances to one against our being seen if he finds a friend with a vessel to help him," thought Gruff; "but if he gets both, and should meet us, I'm afeard they won't stand on who's got the *Daphne*, and go for it for the sake of that gold aboard."

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE RECOVERED YACHT.

BLOWER'S narrative sufficiently tells the story of the recapture of the *Daphne*. Lyon was successful in securing Santioff, who was on deck, and another man with him. The rest were below, and the hatches of the forecastle being closed and fastened they were prisoners, and remained so until the arrival of the men in the longboat.

But meanwhile Lyon had suffered deep anxiety on account of Carrie. He guessed at the nature of the mishap that had befallen her, and never hoped to see her again. But when he learned that she had been saved under exceptionally wonderful circumstances, his joy was complete.

Still there was much to be done. The *Daphne* in the hands of Santioff and his crew had not been improved. The cabins were not in a condition for occupation by persons who look upon cleanliness as essential. But sailors are handy men. Nothing comes amiss to them, and before the first day of

general occupation had expired the chief cabins were in order.

The handsome fittings were damaged, but not hopelessly ruined. One of the amusements of Santioff appeared to have been making a target for pistol practice of the handsome pannelling. He was very expert with the weapon, as was shown in the regular perforations—rough designs of a piratical order, in which the skull and cross-bones figured—made by him with bullets.

But some pictures issued with Christmas numbers were pasted over his work, sized and varnished, and became almost as good as oil paintings. The rest of the restorative work was equally ingenious and neat. The rent tapestry was sewn together, and soap and water did the rest.

It had already been decided what to do with the majority of the prisoners. It only remained to be decided when it should be carried out. With a long voyage ahead of them, Ralph and Lyon saw the necessity of having ample stores on board. The *Daphne* was not ill provided for a small crew, but now there were so many on board more would be required.

"We must clear out the *Iris*," said Lyon.

On the morrow the *Daphne* shifted her ground to within easy distance of the bay where the *Iris* was wrecked. The prisoners to be eventually set free were put ashore in the stockade house with a guard

of four men over them. They received rations, but arms for the time were of course not given them. Eventually they were to be supplied with guns and a small allowance of ammunition, to enable them to obtain game for food, and to protect themselves from attack by the wild beasts they might encounter, among which they ranked the dreaded grizzly to be the most formidable.

Their treatment was very merciful, but their gratitude was not apparent. They had lost the prize for which they had allied themselves with Santioff, and come many thousand miles to gain. Embittered, they remained sullen, refusing even to speak to their conquerors—an exhibition of temper the yachtsmen bore with commendable resignation.

As yet nothing had been done to find the whereabouts of the gold believed to be stored on board. Santioff, in irons, was confined in a place in the fore part of the vessel originally used for the storage of rope and odd material. Sam Mutton, by his especial desire, was appointed guard over the prisoner.

"You may trust me, sir," he said to Lyon, "not to lose sight of him, or give the villain a shadow of a chance of getting away."

Mutton, without being exactly venomous, rejoiced over the downfall of the scheming Spaniard, from whom he had suffered so much ill usage. It was a turn in the wheel of fortune he keenly appreciated,

and his method with the captive may be pardoned on the grounds of his ignorance of the more refined treatment meted out to noble captives by men in a higher walk in life.

Armed with a loaded rifle, he stood sentry at the door, occasionally opening it and peeping in to assure himself that the Spaniard, of whom he was in secret dread, had not exercised some occult power and vanished from his prison. And when he did so, he had ever a word to say that must have tried the fiery spirit of Santioff.

"Ah," he said on one occasion, "you may sit there trying to look as if you was king of Spain, but you're my prisoner, and I'll never leave you till I see you boxed up in a good strong safe stone jail at home. You little thought as you made a football of poor old Sam Mutton, that the day would come when he could, if he liked, give you back as good as you gave him."

Santioff was a type of the old haughty Spaniard, proud and reserved with men whom he looked upon as his inferiors. Hampered by the irons he wore, he could only sit and stare with eyes that blazed with wrath at the exulting Mutton, and answer him as if he were some lower animal barking and snarling at him.

"Out of my sight, dog!" he hissed.

"All in good time," replied Mutton complacently; "you are on show now, and the price I've paid to see you was a pretty heavy one. There isn't hardly an inch of my body that hasn't one time or other during

the months I *was* your dog been made black and blue with kicks and blows."

"If ever I get you again in my power," said Santioff, "I'll flay you."

"No doubt," said Mutton, "you are the sort of man to do it. Anything cruel and brutal, thieving and mean, is in your line. But you won't ever have me again. I've got you—here, with fetters on you like any other felon. Ah, would you!"

Santioff struggled to his feet with a growl, but dropped down again as Mutton presented the rifle at his breast. Tortured as he was, mad with passion to find all his scheming had been thwarted, he held on to the hope that his turn would come again, if he only waited.

So he resumed his seat and his old hauteur, and Mutton closed the door, demonstratively drawing the outside bolts and turning the key in the lock.

Bertie came now and then to keep Mutton company. His boyish mind was dwelling on the treasure reputed to be stored on board. He quietly searched the yacht, and failed to find it. Finally, he asked Mutton where it had been stowed away. Mutton did not know.

"Personally," he said, "I never see it at all. I only know about it from talk that was going on. I picked up things, going about, in pieces, a word here and there."

Bertie was uneasy, and he spoke to Carrie and

Ralph about the gold. They were too happy to worry about it, and told Bertie it would be searched for and found all in good time.

"Suppose it isn't on board at all," suggested Bertie.

"Then we must try to live without it," replied Ralph lightly. What did he care about the gold of the Swiss? He had sufficient for his needs at home, and Carrie alone was worth a dozen piratical hoards.

Bertie had no better listener in Lyon, who told him not to worry about the matter. "I have other things to attend to," he said, which was true, for he was superintending the removal of the stores of the *Iris*, picking out the most requisite, and laying aside that which was not needed, and would only be so much useless cargo to the *Daphne*.

Thus two days and a night passed away, and the second evening came. The work of selection and transfer was almost done, and the tired yachtsmen came on board, leaving their prisoners ashore in the stockade house, the door secured with screws and wooden bars nailed across it.

"By noon to-morrow," said Lyon, "we shall be able to leave. I'll just give a peep at Santioff, and then I shall be ready for dinner."

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE BREAKING OUT OF SANTIOFF.

SANTIOFF sat in his confined cell brooding over his position. There was a small bull's-eye window level with his head, but he could see nothing through it. Its office was to give light, and the thick, coarsely-moulded glass did nothing more.

He knew it was evening by the waning light. By the swish of the sea against the sides of the yacht, he guessed there was a steady breeze blowing, but it was not a gale, for the *Daphne* but gently swayed under the influence of the waves.

The Spaniard was a desperate man. To him light and freedom were everything. By birth he was not noble, although he assumed to be one of the hidalgos of Spain; but he had gipsy blood in his veins, inherited from his mother, and confinement, including the ordinary restrictions of a civilized life, was repulsive to him.

Of such a class are roamers made. Governed by a proper spirit, they become settlers and pioneers of

a new nation; if of ill-governed principles, they degenerate into swindlers and adventurers. Of the latter was Santioff.

He was not sorry for what he had done on the score of morality. But he regretted it as a failure. He saw his mistake in endeavouring to rob Towner Wickram of his share of the spoil. It was a false move, resulting in his losing the *Daphne* and being made prisoner. If he had remained in the land-locked bay with the Yankee and his followers to assist him, he believed he could have defied the men he looked upon as his enemies.

It amazed him to find that they had followed him. He could not understand how they came to track him so many thousand miles from home. He never thought of Guido Castella, who was but one of the crew that had failed to turn up in time to leave with him.

"But who is to account for what an Englishman does?" he asked himself; "they go anywhere and do anything."

Then his mind came back to his position. Was it hopeless? He thought not; and as the darkness, coming early to him in the ill-lighted place, drew near, he heard Mutton outside humming a tune.

To be *his* prisoner was especially galling—he, the creature he had treated as dirt beneath his feet. He rose up, blind for a moment with passion, and in a frenzy jerked his hands asunder. The action,

fierce and violent, snapped one of the wrist links. Possibly there had been some hidden flaw in it; but whatever the reason, whether by that of weakness or the sudden jerk, he was so far free.

There were irons about his legs, and he could not walk without making a noise, unless he muffled them. He tore his handkerchief from his throat, rent it into strips, and proceeded to bind them about the parts where the iron in motion jangled together.

The drawing back of a bolt warned him that Mutton was about to enter the cell. He remembered it was about the time when his jailer, on the evening before, brought him in his last meal for the day. He stood up and raised his hands. Above his head was the broken fetter—a dangerous weapon at the command of such a desperate man.

In a moment his mind was made up. He would kill his jailer, and that would be one step towards freedom. The locks and bolts were drawn, and the door pushed open a few inches.

"Are you there, duke?" asked Mutton, facetiously; "will your grace forgive me if I intrude a moment?"

"I am ill," replied Santioff, with assumed faintness; "the air of this place chokes me."

"It is a bit stuffy," said Mutton, pushing the door further open. He peered in, and saw Santioff leaning against the wall with his hands resting on his head. He could not see the broken fetters dangling behind him.

"Why don't you sit down?" he said; "here, let me help you."

The hands rose in a flash and descended again. Mutton was briefly conscious of fire flashing before his eyes, and then darkness came upon him.

Santioff stepped over his prostrate form and turned to strike another blow. But it was not needed in his opinion. The man was down, and to linger there might shut him out from his chance of making his escape.

It was not so dark outside the cell as in it. That was against him. As yet it would be madness to go on deck, but where was he to hide? He was in a passage, narrow, and leading only to the place from whence he had escaped. There he must remain until night had fallen.

As he decided, sorely against his will, to stay there, the upper door was thrown open, and he and Lyon stood face to face. The latter did not know who was standing there, until he saw the arms of the desperado raised to strike, and then the truth flashed upon him.

The deck was clear. He saw it was so as he came from the aft cabin to visit the prisoner. It would be throwing away time and breath to call for help, and he sprang forward so as to avoid the full force of the blow. He closed with Santioff, and they fell together.

When Lyon encountered the Spaniard in the mist



"'Ah, my only yachtsman,' he said, 'I've got you!'"

—L. S. V.



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two days before, he had assistance to secure him. Now it was a case of man to man, unless he shouted for aid. That he would not do. Alone he would prevent the rascal escaping.

But he was unprepared to find how strong the Spaniard was. Seemingly he had arms of steel, that, locked around him, closed tighter and tighter until they threatened to crush him as if he were in the coils of some huge serpent. Lyon felt his breath going, and he could not have cried out for help now if he would. Santioff wrenched him round so as to get him undermost.

"Ah, my dandy yachtsman," he said, softly, "I've got you."

He had not spoken without justification. Lyon was powerless in his grasp. But Santioff was reckoning without a certain factor that was to make amends for the lack of power in Lyon. The head of Mutton was of more than ordinary thickness, and though stunned by the blow he received, he soon came back to a dim knowledge of things around him.

He sat up, and saw the two men on the floor, backed by the evening sky seen through the open door. From them he glanced at the empty cell, and the knowledge of things recent returned to him.

When he entered the cell to assist the presumed suffering prisoner, Mutton placed his rifle in a corner by the door. Fortunately Santioff failed to see it, and it was for the moment forgotten by its owner.

He struggled to his feet, or to be more correct, his foot, and pegged down the short passage to Lyon's assistance.

More than once in the history of men a wooden leg has proved a most effective weapon. I have seen a possessor of one detach it from his body and defend himself against a savage dog with it. Mutton may have made good use of his before, and it was the only weapon he possessed just then.

He gave Santioff a vicious dig in the back with it, sufficient to deprive the strongest lunged man of breath. Then, as he let go his hold on Lyon and writhed in the acute agony he endured, Mutton gave him another under the armpit that practically put Santioff *hors de combat*.

Lyon was nearly exhausted and half dazed, but he could give Mutton some assistance as he dragged the Spaniard back to his cell, shouting and screaming with pain and fury.

Then there came others upon the scene—Blower, Gruff, Bertie, and Ralph, with a strong backing of seamen. Other and stronger fetters were put on Santioff, and once again he was a prisoner.

"I told him he would never get away from *me*," said Mutton, as he sat at supper in the forecastle, with his head enveloped in a tightly-drawn bandage to ease the aching. Though the skin only was broken, he had received an ugly wound.

"It was a near thing, though," said Blower; "and

I think the captain's right in insisting on having double sentries over him. He's a slippery customer. A man who can steal a yacht wants watching."

"He'd nigh done for the captain," remarked Barnes. "I heard him tell Miss Lyster so, and she says, 'Mutton, you ought to have a medal for your bravery.'"

"Bravery!" mused Mutton, "bravery! It didn't rise to that. I don't put up for being a fighter. I never did. I only did my best. One thing has come of it. I used to moan over having a wooden leg. But now, when I call to mind how useful it's been to-night, I shall cease to repine, as the lover did in the song when his lady married another party."

"I don't see how you bring in that similar," said Blower.

"Simuar-lee, not similar," said Mutton, with the sweet smile of conscious educational superiority; "what I meant was that I wouldn't be troubled in the future. No hand or fist could have done what my wooden leg did to-night, for with one dig it took all the roughness out of a man who is an unmatched mixture of decayed nobility and villany. It made him, for all his greatness, wriggle like a worm—a common worm. There ain't many things as can be so useful to a man as a wooden leg."

"Why, if you was put to it," said Barnes, "you could dibble the holes for planting potatoes with it."

"It might dibble a hole in a too jockylar man,"

said Mutton, fixing a gleaming eye on Barnes. "Isn't there a story about young lions and tigers being perfect lambs until they've tasted blood? Then they become wild and furious. Well, I was a man of peace until to-night. But I've found a use for a weapon I must carry with me to the grave; and now I'm a man of war. Verbal Sap. Note your beany—mark well, as they say in classical schools such as I was brought up in. Don't overdo your joking, Barnes."

Barnes apologized for having gone so far. He admitted it was thoughtless, inconsiderate, and unworthy of him. He also declared that Mutton's deed of rescue was deserving of a niche—he called it "nick"—of fame. In short, he made ample amends for his ill-timed levity, and war was averted for the time.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE GRATITUDE OF RUFFIANS.

THE attempt of Santioff to make his escape led to his being watched more closely. A small hole was drilled in the door of his cell similar to that in ordinary prisons, so that a person outside could look through and see what he was doing. Regular times for him to be brought out for air were arranged, and at no time was he to be on deck without having a strengthened guard to the number of six at the very least.

He was on deck the next morning, with Gruff and others keeping him company. Lyon and Ralph were ashore seeing to the finishing work of emptying the *Iris*, and the longboat plied to and fro with stores.

Santioff perched himself on the capstan so as to command a view of the shore. In his eyes there shone the longing light one sees in a caged animal recently brought from the woods. He turned to Gruff, and suddenly asked him if he cared to become rich ?

"I'm like other people," replied Gruff, "and don't feel a very great objection to money."

"I could make you rich enough to buy a title at home," said Santioff, lowering his voice so that the men who stood a little apart could not hear him.

"Well, if you ain't got any partickler objection on your side to doing a good turn to another, you may do it," returned Gruff.

"Not here—no—impossible," said Santioff.

"I've got to wait till we get home?" said Gruff, with an assumption of innocence. He was beginning to see what Santioff was driving at.

"No," rejoined Santioff; "come nearer. You need not be afraid. These shortened shackles make me helpless."

"I'm not afraid of you, and never was," said Gruff.

"I do not think you are. Then to the point. I have sought a vast store of treasure and found it."

"And we've got it aboard?"

"No, my friend, you are wrong there."

Gruff turned quickly and stared at him. Santioff smiled dryly.

"Have you looked for it?" he asked; "come now, tell me."

"Only Mister Bertie has had a look round."

"Has he found it?"

"I am bound to admit he hasn't."

"You cannot find a thing if it isn't here."

Gruff felt a little chilly. There had been consider-

able talk about the treasure, and it was understood that he and the men were to have a share of it, as prize money.

"Not here," said Santioff again.

"But it was on board," insisted Gruff; "that Yankee chap told me so."

"What Yankee?"

"I saw him down by the bay yonder where the *Daphne* lay. He told me of the way you had swindled him, as if you could go straight with anybody. It isn't in you."

"I am obliged," said Santioff, and he smiled again; "your opinion of me does credit to your powers of observation. You never did trust me, and had every cause to doubt me. But I can be trusted, if it serves my purpose."

Gruff made no immediate reply. He was thinking out, in his slow way, what would be the better thing to do. He elected to adopt the artful *rôle*.

"What is it you want me to do?" he inquired.

"Hear me," said Santioff, with a dramatic motion of his manacled hands. "The gold is not here. I could not trust my men. They might have conspired to murder me for it. You understand? So I hid it away on the shore, intending to return for it."

"That's a queer story."

"It may seem so; but look at the facts. The gold was found, and is not here. Am I such a fool as to sink it in the sea? Ask yourself, my friend. No;

it is on the land; and as you are not afraid of me, why should you fear to go ashore and share it with me. Come; an answer to that."

"Oh, I am to assist you to escape?"

"Why not? At night it will be calm. Look at the sky, and ask yourself if it will not be so. Then there will be a quiet time. You arrange the guard for me. Let it be yourself alone for a while. Then in a boat you and I go ashore and hide. They will look for us, and not find us. There is a continent on which to conceal ourselves. Then we find the gold, divide it, and part—you one way, I the other—to meet no more."

"And starve about for a time and die," said Gruff. "No, thank you. Let the gold go. I don't hunger for it to run that risk."

"You are a coward," said Santioff, with flashing eyes.

"Time's up," said Gruff; "back to your cell. Tramp."

"You order me like a dog."

"Obey orders, or you'll be roughly treated."

Santioff swung his legs defiantly. Then Gruff ordered the men to take him back, and they dragged the Spaniard from the capstan and bore him, uttering threats of vengeance, to his cell, into which he was unceremoniously thrust, and the door locked.

For a time he was like an enraged tiger, tearing and scratching at the woodwork, mad for freedom.



"They took up a position among the rocks, and opened fire on the 'Daphne'..."



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But he presently quieted down, and when Gruff looked through the peep-hole, he saw him lying in a heap in the far corner, exhausted with his wild efforts and the angry emotions he had given vent to.

Gruff was in a very unhappy mood, but he soon cheered up. After all, what did it matter? Santioff might rage and fume, but he would never have the opportunity to return and seek the gold for which he had risked so much—his freedom, if not his life.

The last boat-load was brought from the *Iris*, and Lyon only stayed to set fire to her with his own hands. Better to leave her ashes only to tell the story of her wreck than have her dishonoured by ruffians making her a home, if but for a night. The stockade they were welcome to, as it had but few associations to make it dear to any of them.

It was late in the afternoon, later than they had expected, when this was done. The prisoners were released, and told where to look for the arms left for them, after the last boat was gone. The yacht took fire readily, and before the boat had brought all on board and been hoisted into the davits, a tall column of smoke was rising from her hold straight into the air.

"The wind's almost gone, sir," said Gruff; "we ought to stay here for the night. We couldn't go far, and mightn't find such good anchorage ground."

"Let us stay here, then," said Lyon.

All but the guard at the door of Santioff's cell gathered on deck to watch the rising flames. It was a sad sight, but all agreed with Lyon that it was the best thing to do.

Gruff presently drew him aside and told him of the tempting offer made by Santioff, and Lyon's face showed his disappointment.

"I hoped," he said, "we had 'secured everything, more for the sake of you and the men. But the rascal has in one way out-manceuvred us, unconsciously, it may be; but it is a pity."

"It's no use looking for it, I suppose, sir?"

"I shall not linger here one moment longer than is necessary."

The arms and stores for the men on shore were a short way up the beach. The *Daphne* lay within a short distance of the shore, and they could hear the fellows shout as they unearthed the things left in mercy for their use.

Then one was seen to point towards the yacht, and there was a consultation among them. It ended in their taking up a position among the rocks on shore and deliberately opening fire on the *Daphne*.

Such base treachery and want of gratitude was unlooked for, and the first bullet passed between the throng on deck, happily doing no injury. Carrie was sent below, and the men took shelter behind the side of the yacht, from whence they opened fire on the rascals.

But it was a waste of powder and shot, and their return shots were hailed with derisive yells from the shore. Hats were hoisted on the barrels of rifles and danced up and down in mockery. It was very exasperating, but nothing could be done.

The fire on the *Iris* increased in volume, and when the night came her timbers were blazing fiercely. She was aflame from end to end, and the glare threw the *Daphne* up in bold relief.

It was dangerous for any one to cross the deck, for the moment a man showed there was a shot from the shore. And the aim of the men there was too good to be despised.

But the burning vessel soon exhausted itself and sank down to a heap of hot ashes. It was some relief, but did not bring entire safety. The ruffians had the position of the *Daphne* well in their minds, and it might be some of them could see her darkly limned against the sea, and every few minutes a shot was fired. Eventually one crashed through the port-hole of the chief cabin and smashed the swinging lamp, fortunately not yet lighted.

"This won't do," said Bertie; "they may go on all night. Such a mean, contemptible lot of beggars I never met with in my life."

"Gruff," said Lyon.

"Here, sir."

They were all under shelter as a matter of prudence. No lights as yet were showing.

"Take a dozen men with you and clear out that lot," said Lyon; "lower the boat on the other side, and pull round so that you can land unseen. Take them by surprise. The mercy shown them was thrown away. Do not extend it."

"I won't, sir," was the determined reply.—"Over there, see that the pulleys are well greased, and lower away."

CHAPTER XXIX.

JUSTICE IS METED OUT TO A BAD LOT.

IT was dark, for the moon was on the wane. She did not rise in her reduced condition till early on the following morning. Save for the crack of an occasional rifle from the shore, all was still.

A boat was lowered, and Gruff picked out the men to accompany him. It took a little time, and after the selection was made the arms were looked to. Finally, the men stole into the boat and pushed off. In the bow of the boat was a piece of tarpaulin that Gruff did not observe till it was too late to throw it back on deck.

"I do hate things done slovenly," he said; "I'd like to know the name of the man who stowed that bit of stuff in the boat."

"It wasn't there when we lowered her," pleaded one of the men, speaking as Gruff had done, in an undertone.

"Stuff and nonsense," grunted Gruff.

He steered the boat out for another furlong, keeping

in the line of the *Daphne* so as to escape observation on shore. Then he bore round and steered south, keeping parallel to the coast. His intention was to go past the mouth of the bay, wear round, and land on the beach beyond. Unless the treacherous rascals were keeping a very keen, all-round watch, a surprise was in store for them.

It was possible to see for a short distance. Gruff had his eyes on the offending tarpaulin, which by-and-by seemed to move. Then it was lifted up, and a head appeared from beneath it.

"It's only me, Gruff. I felt I must come."

"Bad luck to us, it's Mister Bertie."

"It was no use asking for leave," said Bertie, as he stepped over the oars and took his seat beside the boatswain; "a refusal was a certainty, with the usual homily about running needless risks. Of course, Gruff, you are glad I've come."

"Can't say I am, sir," replied Gruff shortly; "it's risky and needless. And you give me sich a turn."

"You thought I was a ghost?"

"No, I didn't. For the time I didn't think anything reg'lar. It was a sort of jumble in my head. Moreover, I've got to look arter you."

"Pray don't trouble yourself," said Bertie politely. "I am in command by reason of my position as third officer."

"Not to the *Daphne*," said Gruff doggedly; "you was on the *Iris*, but you ain't got your new app'int-

ment yet. You are an interloper, Mister Bertie, and unless I takes you on as a volunteer, you sit still."

It was plain that Gruff was angry, but his temper was short and soon evaporated. As he steered round the point for the shore he whispered,—

"Being here, Mister Bertie, do your best; but you shouldn't—no, you really shouldn't."

No doubt this remonstrance bore upon the fright he had received. Bertie merely said "he wouldn't do it again," and they settled into silence.

"Ease all; back water, bow," whispered Gruff a minute later.

The boat lightly grounded on the beach, and the men got out, all but two who were to remain in charge of it. The rifles were carefully picked up and the cartridges inserted into the barrels.

Bertie had brought his with him, and with Gruff headed the men. They went forward in grim silence, until they came to the spot where the stores had been placed for the men.

They were supposed to be higher up, and one of the men went forward to scout. He returned with the information that nobody was to be seen. Ahead lay the smouldering ashes of the *Iris*.

The desultory firing had ceased. That might have guided the party to the vicinity of the rascals. Where were they? Had they cleared out and gone?

Bertie felt a little creepy. If asked why he did so, he would have said he did not know. The

air, he thought, was chilly. He nudged Gruff by the elbow.

"I'll scout," he whispered; "don't stop me. I've got to go."

It was in action only he could shake off the feeling that he shrewdly suspected was akin to fear. It would have comforted him if he had known that the emotion was familiar to strong, brave men when entering the battlefield. He who, as a soldier or a sailor, has been on the war-path and not felt it, is endowed with a rare insensibility to the presence of danger.

Bertie moved quickly forward towards the ashes of the *Iris*. A short distance from the spot he climbed up to the summit of the rocks and stood erect. There was a flash of fire from the region of the stockade, and a bullet knocked his cap off.

"Too near to be pleasant," he muttered, as he stooped to pick up his cap. "This way, my lads," he shouted, and the men rushed up the rocks pell-mell.

"They are inside the stockade," said Bertie, and ran forward as the rattle of arms was heard from that direction.

He was cool now, the crisis was past, the fluttering and the sense of chill were gone. He plunged at the stockade as if he bore a charmed life, and recklessly climbed to the summit.

Gruff jerked him back again as half a dozen

bullets screamed in his ears. He fancied he was hit, but could not tell where. The men climbed to the top, lay for the fraction of a second on their stomachs, and then rolled inside. Gruff and Bertie remained alone.

"Give me a leg up," said Bertie.

Before Gruff could assent or refuse the rattle of firearms came from another quarter. Some men were concealed in the wood, and, locating Bertie by his voice, aimed and fired in his direction. He was certain he was hit this time, but again could not tell the spot. A feeling of weakness, approaching helplessness, came over him, and he fell against the stockade.

"I'm done for, Gruff," he gasped; "go in and give them pepper."

But Gruff took the boy in his powerful arms, and bounded down to the level ground, as some men, howling like demons, came dashing out of the wood. It was a few of the followers of Towner Wickram who had found their way back again. Some of their number were still away, lost in the wood; and the impression of the men who had fired on the yachtsmen was that the friends they had lost were in the stockade, and were being attacked.

Knowing they had been deserted by Santioff's men, there could be no coalition between them. Moreover, they were in entire ignorance of the recapture of the *Daphne*, and the subsequent putting ashore of the crew.

It would have fared ill with Gruff and the wounded Bertie, but for a diversion created by the opening of the gate of the stockade, and the retreat of Santioff's men—we give them that name to distinguish them from the others—hard pressed by the yachtsmen. Seeing the followers of Towner Wickram, but failing to recognize them, they dashed into their midst, using their knives and pistols with terrible effect.

It was a blind, mad fight in the gloom; but Gruff, cool in that hour of danger, saw that something fortuitous had transpired, rallied his men with a shout, and gave the order to "close in."

They heard his voice, and forming up in front of him poured a deadly fire into the midst of the fighting men, once associates, but now furious foes. It was a brief contest. Every man was inspired to act for himself, and those who escaped from the fire of the yachtsmen, and could break away, fled into the wood.

Gruff saw them fly, and called on his men to make their way to the boat. He picked up Bertie in his arms, and led the way with long, hasty strides. The boy was insensible, and the old boatswain feared he was dead.

The men mustered by the boat, and as he carefully laid Bertie down in the stern Gruff asked, "Any loss on our side?"

"A few wounds, sir," was the answer, "and Grimmer shot through the head."

"Poor fellow!"

The boat pushed off, and the men pulled their hardest back to the *Daphne*. Their return was being looked for with deep anxiety, the heavy firing from the shore having indicated serious work. Bertie had been missed, too, and it was guessed he had gone with the boat.

"Lower the ladder and a chair," cried Gruff.

"Somebody wounded, Gruff?" cried Lyon from the deck.

"A man or two, sir, and I'm afeard Mister Bertie is hurt."

The chair was lowered, and Bertie placed in it. Gruff ascended the ladder, steadying the chair in its ascent. Bertie just breathed, and Lyon lifted him tenderly out of his seat and carried him below.

There was no fuss. Lyon examined Bertie, Carrie and Ralph standing quietly by with aching hearts. They all feared the worst.

"He has been hit in the side," said Lyon; "it is a dangerous wound. I must probe for the bullet by-and-by. For the present all I want is some cold water and a bandage."

In his early manhood, two years after he attained his majority, Lyon thought of studying for the medical profession. Inheriting some money from a relative, he abandoned the profession, but he had acquired sufficient knowledge of surgery to be of good service now. Carrie, too, had taken lessons of a teacher of a first-aid society.

They did all they could for Bertie, and he recovered his senses. Seeing them standing by his side he looked puzzled, but the events of the night came back to him, and he tried to smile.

"I'm hurt, I fancy," he said.

"Talk as little as you can," advised Lyon.

"But tell me—did we lick the fellows?"

"They got the worst of it somehow," said Ralph.

"Now be quiet; there's a good fellow!"

"I won't say another word," murmured Bertie.

CHAPTER XXX.

HOMeward BOUND.

CARRIE watched by Bertie all night. At intervals Lyon came in to see him. The great danger was that fever would arise, and towards morning it began to manifest itself.

And there were others, too, in a dangerous condition. Barnes, who was of the boating party, and had distinguished himself in the attack on the stockade, was wounded in the head, and brain fever threatened. Two others were in unwilling possession of bullets, one in his thigh, the other in his arm, and Lyon had to see to them all.

Then, as daylight appeared, and no sign of the foe, the men asked for permission to go ashore and fetch the body of Grimmer, and give him a seaman's burial. It was impossible to refuse them.

They buried the dead of the enemy, and brought back the body of Grimmer, with one wounded man, who had been lying on the ground all night.

It was Jorkins, who had enlightened Towner

Wickram in the matter of the empty boxes in the cave where the store of Sutter's gold was found. He was a tall man, none too good-looking, but with a quiet, resigned face, and Lyon took rather kindly to him.

He was shot in the groin, and the bullet was extracted without drawing a groan from him.

"Thank you, sir," he said, when the operation was over.

Lyon asked him how he came to be mixed up with such a band of rascals as the men under Santioff and Towner Wickram. He answered, with a dry smile,—

"Went wrong when young, sir, and never could quite straighten myself. It's easy enough to get into a crooked road, but hard to get out of it."

Grimmer, sewn up in his hammock, was consigned to the deep; and the wind rising in the north-east, the *Daphne* spread her cloud of canvas, and proceeded on her homeward way.

Bertie being in a precarious condition cast a gloom over the whole crew. The men went about their duties in a quiet, stealthy way, whispering to each other, and hoping for the best. Bertie was an immense favourite among them.

Santioff heard of the disaster, and when brought out for exercise very imprudently expressed his pleasure on hearing such "good news." It required all Gruff's authority to stop the men from throwing the Spaniard overboard.

"Let him be," he said; "there is another fate in store for him." Santioff snapped his fingers. "Well, if you show any more unnateral feeling, my good man," added Gruff, "I'll stop your exercise for a week."

It was something to the Spaniard to have a break in the monotony of his imprisonment. It cowed him as he pictured himself shut up all day and night without a break, and he indulged in no more jubilation.

Then arrived the hour when Bertie was at his worst, and the change came for the better. But that was not for nearly a week later, and all the time the *Daphne* was steadily keeping on her course. And the other wounded had all progressed favourably.

The promised convalescence of Bertie was celebrated by the hanging out of bunting on the fore rigging. Gruff, as he put it, "took a rise" out of Santioff by pointing it out to him as he brought him out for his customary taste of the open air.

"You guess what that's for?" he said.

"How should I know?" sneered the Spaniard; "you English hang out rags on every occasion—when you are born, when you marry, when you die. You even run up a bit of black stuff when you hang a man. Rags are the specialty of your people."

"Mister Bertie's got the better of the fever, and is doing well," said Gruff.

"It is nothing to me," said Santioff. "What! another prisoner? I was not aware I had company."

It was Jorkins who had given rise to this remark. He came out of the fore-deck cabin, walking with a stick. The man was pale and thin, but there was a restful look in his eyes.

Santioff saw he was not manacled, and frowned. A suspicion of some undue consideration being shown to Jorkins arose in his mind.

"Where's his guard—his irons?" he demanded.

"He isn't going to have either," replied Gruff. It delighted him to say things that were gall and wormwood to the Spaniard.

"Why not?" furiously asked Santioff.—"Here, you, Jorkins, come here."

Jorkins glanced at him, but took no further notice of the request, and seated himself on a coil of rope.

"Do you know the sort of man you are letting run loose?" cried Santioff; "I am a lamb, a chicken to him. He will murder a man in his sleep. He is wanted for killing a man in cold blood."

Jorkins never stirred or looked at him. Santioff hailed Ralph, who was walking on the aft deck.

"I owe you nothing," he cried, "but I'll not sit still and let you be befooled by this rascal. Ask him if he dares go back to Brooklyn? It's seven years since he left there, but they will not forget him if ever he shows his face in his old haunts."

Jorkins was pale when he appeared on deck; he

was white now. He looked straight out to sea, and answered Santioff never a word. Ralph glanced from the one to the other, and bade the Spaniard be silent.

"I will," was the answer, given with a hard laugh, "but don't say I have not warned you. I charge that man with being a murderer, and a fugitive from justice. Can he deny it is true?"

"I deny nothing," said Jorkins, addressing Ralph, "and he can prove nothing."

"You prove it for me," said Santioff. "Oh, there will be rare doings on the *Daphne* by-and-by."

Ralph was not really disposed to listen to any charge made by Santioff, but the manner of Jorkins was not satisfactory. He made no effort to deny the accusation against him. Ralph spoke of it to Lyon later on, as they sat beside Bertie, who was asleep.

"I am not inclined to follow Santioff's lead in anything," said Lyon. "I rather like Jorkins; there is something straight in the look and bearing of the fellow. And he is but one."

From that day, for many days, Jorkins held aloof from the deck when Santioff was there. The Spaniard always asked after him, and sometimes wanted to know if he had killed anybody yet. One day Blower inquired why Jorkins, who was well treated, and had his full liberty, should kill any one.

"Because he is mad at times," said Santioff, "stark, staring mad. The fit comes on him at any moment.

He doesn't know himself that it is coming on, but just starts away with any weapon and runs amuck."

Then Santioff laughed again, as if enjoying a good joke. Blower was not endowed with an undue amount of delicacy and caution. The moment he met Jorkins, which was about an hour later, he told him what Santioff had said. The face of the man turned to a ghastly hue.

"He said *that*, did he?" he muttered. "Well, you tell him to keep clear of me the next time the fit comes over me."

Blower did not deliver the message, but he brooded over it. Finally he consulted his crony, Mutton, and they decided to keep their eyes on the doubtful Jorkins.

And the man himself withdrew from almost all association with those on board. He had certain duties to perform, which he did quietly. His work done, he would sit about, smoking or thinking, with a sad, wistful look on his face.

When Bertie was strong enough to come up and sit on deck, Jorkins gradually insinuated himself so as to become a sort of body-servant to him. He had quite a gift of anticipating Bertie's wishes, and all orders given him he executed with a rare utterance of words.

So the time passed, and they were approaching the colder region of the Cape. Warmer clothing was put on, and the state of the weather was a matter of

great interest. The sky was less clear, and the wind more uncertain, and of a less even character.

The Strait of Magellan was open to them, of course, but Gruff declared for rounding the Cape. It would take a little longer, but the more open sea was preferable. So round the Cape they bore, and stormy days began.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE VISION SEEN BY JORKINS.

“WE can't give the Cape too wide a berth to-night,” said Gruff. There was a gathering of the officers astern, and all eyes were turned to masses of black cloud scudding up from the south.

Carrie walked the deck, muffled in furs, the picture of health and womanly beauty. Whatever the voyage had done, nothing was more sure, not even the wreck of the *Iris*, than that it had given her the longed-for strength she needed a year before. Her lassitude was gone; the bloom of the peach was on her cheeks; she walked with a quick elastic step. Nothing in the way of weather came amiss to her. She professed to enjoy, and did enjoy, the cold blow from the south.

“How much sea-room have we on the land side, Gruff?” asked Ralph.

“Ten or twelve miles at the most, sir. We ought to beat out a good ten miles more.”

“What a loss of time!”

“Why, sir,” said Gruff, “ships have been known to

beat to and fro for weeks before they got round this tail end of Ameriky The *Daphne* sails as close to the wind as anything I ever knowed, but she can't go dead in the teeth of it."

"We have it on the beam now."

"It's veering round to the south-east. We must stand out more, sir, unless we wish to be driven back, or go ashore."

So the *Daphne* stood on the outward tack, and the wind and sea grew rougher. The storm worked round eastward, and a few flakes of snow began to fall.

Night came on, and all but those who had occasion or desire to be on deck went below. Ralph was the chief officer of the watch. Overhead there was a full moon, whose face was hidden every minute or so by heavy masses of inky cloud.

Forward, close to the bowsprit, was Jorkins, with his eyes fixed on the rolling, foam-tipped waves. Close beside him stood Mutton and Blower.

"See, there!" said Jorkins, suddenly turning and facing them. The movement was so unexpected, and his speaking a matter of such rare occurrence, that they were fairly taken aback. "Look, over yonder!"

"Yes, it's rough," said Mutton feebly.

"It is not water I am speaking of," said Jorkins, fixing his eyes, that had a strange lack-lustre in their depths, upon him, "but the *man*. Can't you see him?"

"My sight isn't what it was," replied Mutton. "Do you see anything, Blower?"

"He's coming nearer, beckoning to me impatiently," said Jorkins. "Is he angry with me? No, for he knows now I never meant to kill him. We were friends. It was an accident; but they would have hanged me for it. See, now! He is walking, but gets no nearer. How is that? We must be flying from him; but the ship can't travel stern first."

He went on muttering to himself. Mutton and Blower exchanged glances of dismay. There was little doubt that the madness of which Santioff had spoken was coming upon the man.

"As he wants to get here," said Jorkins, raising his voice, "and don't seem to be able to do it, I ought to go to him. It isn't far to walk."

"Walk, man!" said Mutton; "why, it's the sea."

"No, it's dry land," said Jorkins composedly; "there are houses and streets, and there's the river—the Hudson. I'm going to him. Don't stop me, if you value your lives."

They did value them, inasmuch that they did not dare to interfere with him as he stepped over the side and took a seat near the bowsprit. Blower turned a terrified eye in the direction of the men of the watch. They were gathered amidships, listening to some orders given by Gruff.

A fierce gust of wind smote the yacht, causing her to heel over, almost to lie on her beam-ends. The men of the watch sprang aloft to shorten sail, and Gruff shouted for all hands on deck.

Blower looked back at the place where Jorkins had been sitting. He was gone.

Mutton was gathering himself up from the lee scuppers, where he had been blown by the wind.

"He's been blown into the sea," said Blower aghast.

"What are you idling there for?" roared Gruff. "All hands to shorten sail!"

This was for Blower's benefit. Mutton, of course, owing to his "infirmity," could not go aloft. He stole away to the men on guard outside the door of Santioff's cell.

On the whole, it was better that a man who was mad should destroy himself rather than kill others; but it was horrible to think of. Mutton sat down upon an inverted bucket, put his face into his hands, and groaned.

"What's the matter with you?" asked one of the men.

Mutton shivered, and in a few words told the story of Jorkins being blown into the sea. He was just finishing it, when Jorkins in person appeared in the passage, the light falling from a swinging lamp upon his face, which was quite composed.

"That man safe inside there?" he asked.

It was a question he put nightly before retiring to his hammock, one of the few utterances he favoured the men with. He was assured Santioff was safe, and went away.

"You were wrong, Blower, about his going overboard."

"No, I wasn't. He went over. He's not a mortal man but an evil spirit. He'll bring bad luck to the *Daphne*; you see if he doesn't."

"We'll wait and see what it's like before hanging him," said one of the men facetiously.

Blower came in, relieved from duty for the present. Everything was done to make the yacht snug for the night.

"It's snowing fast," he said, holding up his arms, which were dotted with the white flakes.

"It's a night to see Vanderdecken," said Mutton.

"There isn't such a party," replied Blower; "and if there is, it's t'other Cape he can't round, that called Good Hope."

"It was the Horn he said blasphemous things of," insisted Blower. "Ah! what now?"

The yacht heeled over, and they were all jumbled together. Santioff in his cell shrieked savagely to be let out.

"Don't leave me here to be drowned like a rat in a hole. Let me out, and give me a chance for my life with the rest."

But the yacht righted herself quickly, only to turn the other way. Then she rose and pitched like a restive horse. Blower staggered to the door, opened it, and looked to see if he could find anything to explain the strange conduct of the *Daphne*.

But she was going well again, riding duck-like over a turbulent sea. According to the men who were on deck, she got into some mysterious eddy, or whirlpool, that threw her over on her side, and twisted her about as if she had been a walking-stick.

Some declared they knew of a whirlpool being there, having read about it. Others thought it was nothing more than an extra gust of wind. But when Blower and Mutton came to compare notes, they charged it to the evil working of Jorkins, to whom they attributed certain occult powers assuredly never yet possessed by mortal man.

CHAPTER XXXII.

A LOSS AT THE FALKLANDS.

THE truth about Jorkins can be told. He was no uncanny creature, but an ordinary man with the weight of a great sorrow on his breast. Of its nature you may learn more anon. For the present, an explanation of his supposed miraculous escape from death will suffice. He escaped by ordinary means.

Racked by a remorse that never softened in his breast, he at times was mentally overwhelmed. It was then that he lost all knowledge of the every-day life around him, saw strange things, and talked wildly. It was, in a sense, insanity, and one of the fits was on him when he talked with Blower and Mutton of a figure walking on the sea.

Again, it was true he fell off the bow of the vessel, and must inevitably have been drowned but for his catching hold of the bobstay as he fell. As he hung to it, the spray dashed fiercely into his face, cooled his blood, and restored his senses.

He knew nothing of the details of his getting into that position, but he understood the cause, and climbed back on deck, wondering what he had done. Nobody was close by to reproach him—apparently none had any knowledge of his escapade—and he went away to ask after the prisoner, and from thence to bed.

But that adventure set him in a fair way to become a modern Jonah. The *Daphne* that night was subjected to much buffeting by the storm. She lost her mizzen topmast, and suffered damage in other ways. In the morning land was in sight. Despite the efforts made to stand off, the wind and waves had carried her shoreward.

Then talk about Jorkins was bandied about, emanating, in the first instance, from Blower and Mutton. They were honest enough in their belief that Jorkins was an uncanny person, and all round among the crew it was considered that the yacht would be better without him.

But he was unconscious of it, or affected not to know it. During the next three days, when the *Daphne* was knocked about by wind and sea, he did his ordinary work, marvelling a little, perhaps, that he was not called upon to do more with the rest of the crew.

But Gruff did not trouble him. Gruff, in many ways, was as superstitious as any man on board. He wished that Jorkins had remained ashore, and seriously debated in his mind the advisability of landing him somewhere as soon as possible.

All this was kept from the officers of the yacht and Carrie, until the day came when the *Daphne* weathered the Cape, and, like an athlete spent with the effort to win a race, dropped her anchor in a sheltered bay to take a rest. Then Gruff took Jorkins in hand in the seclusion of the boatswain's cabin.

Not being a diplomatist, or endowed with the gift of flowery language, he went straight to the point, and asked him if he had murder on his mind. Jorkins looked straight at him, and made no reply.

"There's something queer about you," said Gruff, "and the men think your presence isn't good for the *Daphne*."

"I see," replied Jorkins; "you think there is a mouth too many."

"Save us, no! There's any amount of stores aboard."

"I mean a pocket too many to take in a share of the gold of the Swiss."

"There's not a grain of it on the *Daphne*."

Jorkins looked at him again, and smiled queerly. It occurred to Gruff, who in some matters was as simple as a child, that the smile was a peculiarly evil one.

"Touch at the Falklands and leave me there," he said.

"You are willing to go."

"Certainly I am."

"And you won't bear us any malice and show it by coming back again?"

Jorkins laughed outright, but it was not a hearty laugh; there was an element of bitterness in it.

"I'll come back if you ask me," he said, "not before. I suppose you wish me to go quietly, without speaking to the gentlemen. They might object, and call you a lot of superstitious ignoramuses, you know."

"Edeicated gentlemen don't understand these things," said Gruff doggedly; "we sailors see signs, and feel there's something in 'em. What's in 'em comes to pass."

"As you've set your minds on my leaving you," said Jorkins, after a pause, "I'll do so. But you will be sorry for it when it is too late."

"I can bear up agen the losses of life," said Gruff obstinately. "If you want a pound or two—"

"Thanks, I am well provided with money," said Jorkins; "anything more?"

"Nothing, as I knows on."

Jorkins left the cabin, and Gruff, though not entirely satisfied in his heart, was glad a disagreeable task had been accomplished with remarkable success. He rather expected Jorkins would refuse to go, plead to stay, or become defiant. But he had accepted the position with great coolness, and behaved all round like a sensible man.

After a rest the *Daphne* steered for Stanley, the seat of the government of the Falkland Isles, and

arrived there without further contention of any magnitude with the elements.

A big steamer passed them on the way, and Jorkins said it was an American trader that would probably put in at the Falklands. They found her lying in the harbour, and Jorkins in confidence assured Gruff that he would make quiet arrangements for going with her.

As shore leave was liberally allowed to the yachtsmen, Jorkins had no difficulty in going ashore. He had no effects but his rifle and other weapons, which he took with him ostensibly to shoot wild fowl.

The next day the steamer, named the *Bird of Freedom*, departed, having added to her cargo a considerable quantity of down, gathered from the wild geese shot by the inhabitants, and some boxes of seal-skins. Jorkins was on board, having quietly arranged to depart in her, and the crew of the *Daphne* were jubilant.

But the leaving of Jorkins was a more momentous matter to them all than they thought. Much was to come of it, but of a different nature to the superstitious fears that had troubled their breasts.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

AWAY FOR BUENOS AYRES.

“GRUFF, you are a miserable muff!”

Bertie was very angry. Jorkins being missed, inquiries were made for him, and they led to a free and full confession from the boatswain. He stood before Bertie hanging his head sheepishly, but he pleaded the general welfare of the yacht and men.

“He wasn’t a nateral creature,” he said; “a man who can see people walking on the sea, and tumble into it on a stormy night without being drowned, is not the man to have with us.”

“Oh, that is the sheerest nonsense,” said Bertie. “He used to talk to me more than to anybody else, and he told me how he mercifully escaped. And he promised me something.”

“Like as not, sir,” said Gruff doggedly; “a man of his stamp will promise anything. I’ve had parties promise to give me a pound if I lent ‘em a shilling for a week. I’ve twice entered into that speculation, and it hasn’t paid.”

"He knows where the gold is hidden, and I was to find it by-and-by. Just the sort of thing I've longed to do; and now you've spoilt the whole business. Gruff, you are a ridiculous fellow."

Gruff went away rather offended. He had hoped and believed his conduct would meet with approval, and above all things he objected to being called ridiculous.

"The faith of the dear boy in that fellow," he said to Blower, "beats anything. But young people are so trustful. They think everybody is as honest and truthful as themselves."

"If that Jorkins knowed where the gold was," said Blower, "why didn't he p'int it out?"

"Oh, he's been plumbing up Mister Bertie with visions of their going back to that place over yonder together, and digging it up and carrying it home in sacks. Boys dote on that sort of thing."

"They are innercent as babies."

It was comforting to know that the crew entirely approved of his conduct; but there was more reproof in store for Gruff. Lyon told him he ought to have spoken of the "nonsense" that was afloat; Ralph said that Jorkins was a loss; and Carrie shed tears. "He looked so lonely, and was so sad," she said.

But the subject was soon dropped, and the *Daphne* once more put to sea. The next stopping-place would be Buenos Ayres, and from thence the *Daphne* would make for home.

Monte Video would be more in the direct course, but in the light of the past, and bearing in mind the possibility of Towner Wickram being successful in his efforts to get there and make trouble for the *Daphne*, Lyon decided to avoid that city.

Gruff had revealed everything that passed between him and the Yankee, and it was evident that the plan of the man was feasible. Whether the *Daphne* was in the hands of Santioff or any one else would not be a thing to consider. Towner Wickram wanted the vessel, in the belief she carried the gold, and he would do his best to capture her.

Having done so—as a well-armed piratical vessel could hardly fail to do—he could wipe out evidence of his crime, and leave neither the yacht nor her living freight free to tell the tale. At the bottom of the sea would lie all the records of his crime.

A week had been lost in doubling the Cape through the opposing winds, and now there was but a poor breeze to carry the yacht on her way. She would be at least a month behind her arranged time.

As if in mockery of the superstitions of the seamen, the *Daphne* met with many hindrances on her way. She had rounded the Cape with Jorkins on board; without him she several times narrowly escaped being wrecked in the open sea. Twice was she assailed by hurricanes that tested the seamanship of her crew and the strength of her timbers. After the second visitation she had to lie to to repair her masts and rigging.

Then came a calm, long and irritating. It is very nice to lie idly in a boat rocking on the sea, a mile or two off a fashionable seaside resort; but to be compelled to rest on a copper coloured sea by day, and on a blank boundless expanse feebly reflecting the stars overhead by night, for an entire week, without seeing more of the outer world than the smoke of one solitary distant steamer, is quite another thing.

They ran short of water, and steered in to find a likely spot where it could be obtained. At the time they were about fifty miles south of the Rio Negro. As the men were filling the last of a score of casks they had brought ashore, they saw a long line of horsemen sweeping down upon them from the open country. The men belonged to a tribe of aborigines, and the horses were part of the countless herds that roam the plains of South America, offspring of the animals bestrode by the Spaniards on the battlefields where the Incas met defeat.

The last cask had to be abandoned, and the men as they pulled away just escaped the arrows and spears hurled at them from the beach by the wild natives.

"If Jorkins were here," said Bertie sarcastically to Gruff, "nothing of this sort would happen. You sent away your luck."

But it was only occasionally the boatswain heard of his mistake. On these occasions he eased his mind by falling foul of Blower and Mutton, and the crew

taking up the same strain, the originators of the ill-feeling against Jorkins suffered considerably, and the practical expulsion of the man from the *Daphne* was more than avenged.

Meanwhile there was a movement elsewhere that threatened to bring calamity and death to our friends, and for a time we must leave them, to see what was being done in Monte Video.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE ARRIVAL OF THE "RATTLESNAKE."

ONCE more at Monte Video. The time evening, and the sky a perfect marvel of graduating tints, from deep orange in the west to a pale, dull blue in the east.

On the quay at the eastern end of the harbour walked De Tereul, after having suffered months of imprisonment awaiting trial for which there was no prosecutor. As he was a suspicious character, the authorities showed him little mercy and no consideration. They kept him as long as it pleased them, and finally discharged him because he was as idle in prison as out of it, and a burden to the republic.

By that time Adrian had got into trouble and was laid by the heels, with a charge of petty robbery hanging over his head. As a robbery, it was a small affair, but it happened to be perpetrated on a great man, no other indeed than the chief magistrate, whom Adrian met wandering home after a liberal dinner with the French consul, and unhesitatingly knocked him down and emptied his pockets.

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Unfortunately one of the police, afterwards suspected of being at the time dozing in an adjacent doorway, saw what was going on, and arrested the thief; and thus it came to pass that Adrian was in safe custody, or De Tereul, knowing what he had incurred at the hands of his old confederate, would not have ventured to walk so boldly on the quay as he did that evening.

The "accredited agent" was looking for something to do, a commission to execute, a weak sailor the worse of drink to rob. He was not particular which it was. A ship, long and low in the hull, with tall masts, two in number, had just come in and dropped her anchor. De Tereul was estimating her quality, and reckoning up the amount of probable profit she would bring to him.

On the whole he thought—not much. He had a shrewd suspicion of the nature of that craft, and of the sort of men she carried for a crew.

"Your name is the *Rattlesnake*," muttered De Tereul, as he glanced at her bows, "and you've got teeth."

A boat was lowered, and two men with a crew of four took their seats in it. Then the rowers pulled to the shore, and the two men got out. One was a tall Yankee, Towner Wickram by name, the other was an undersized Portuguese, who made amends for his natural ugliness by wearing a most resplendent uniform, a compound of the admiral and general, with a dash of the mountebank.

De Tereul fumbled in his pocket for a card, forgetting for the moment that the authorities had confiscated his entire stock, six in number. Recalling the fact, he bowed low, and introduced himself by word of tongue.

"Behold me," he said, "De Tereul—accredited agent. Is there much I can do for you—or little? Command me."

Towner Wickram cast a quick glance at him, reckoning him up. He turned to his companion and said,—

"We may learn what we want to know from this fellow."

"Try him then," said the other curtly.

"Has any vessel put in here recently—from the south?" asked Wickram.

"I forget," said De Tereul tapping his forehead; "hungry and athirst, my brain is not so clear."

Towner Wickram laughed grimly and tossed him a dollar.

"Fancy you have eaten and drunk, and answer me," he said.

"The last from the south was the *Bird of Freedom*—bound for Boston," said De Tereul.

"Not a yacht?"

"No; but there was one at Stanley in the Falklands," said De Tereul. "It is coming on, but will not be here for a while, if it comes at all."

De Tereul was curious. He, too, was interested in

a yacht that might appear. Instinctively he understood the character of the *Rattlesnake*, and he had the gift of putting two and two together.

"A yacht gone for gold—a yacht to return with gold—an armed vessel looking for it—so," he thought, as Wickram and his companion exchanged a few words in an undertone. He overheard the name of the latter. It was Narragua.

They turned back without taking any further notice of him, and were taken back to the *Rattlesnake*. De Tereul, the richer by a dollar for their coming, sauntered into the town to get something to eat.

Ever on the look-out for possible prey, he espied a stranger wandering in the maze of narrow streets, looking about him. His dress and figure showed that he was one of Wickram's countrymen, more roughly dressed, and with "miner and prospector" broadly written on him. It was Jorkins, who had come thus far in the *Bird of Freedom*, and had remained behind to carry out a fixed purpose in his mind. De Tereul smiled, doffed his hat, and said it was a fine day.

Jorkins concluded it was fine enough for most people, and would have gone on. But De Tereul was not to be denied. Surely there was something to be made out of this man?

"You come here—when?" he asked as he turned back with him.

"In the *Bird of Freedom*," replied Jorkins curtly; "what of that?"

"You have friends here?" said De Tereul insinuatingly.

"I don't know a living creature. But I expect some friends in a yacht that is coming up from the south."

De Tereul gasped. This yacht seemed to permeate through all things foreign he came across. He laid a hand upon the arm of Jorkins, and made a bold bid for his confidence.

"I, too, know of a yacht," he said, "and look for it—a yacht that went far way round to the western coast for gold. It was to come in here on its way home. I was promised it should do so."

It was the turn of Jorkins to gasp and stare. He fixed his eyes on the half-caste, who assumed a look of innocence as he brushed away a tear that existed only in an imaginary sense, and sighed.

"It will be bad for that yacht when it comes," he said, "unless it is protected. It is waited for."

"What do you mean?" demanded Jorkins.

De Tereul explained. He saw no prospect of getting any further profit out of the *Rattlesnake*, and it would give him infinite pleasure to thwart her purpose, assuming he had divined what it was. Jorkins listened attentively, but did not seem to be much surprised.

De Tereul was disappointed. He expected to see Jorkins disturbed and anxious. He coolly inquired if he could be of any further service, and if not he was

prepared to receive a dollar as some slight recognition of his services.

"You will get no dollar from me," said Jorkins roughly; "what do you take me for? Which way are you going?"

"The reason of that question—why?" asked De Tereul.

"Because my way will be the opposite road. Now then, which way?"

De Tereul loftily said he was going into the town to pay a visit to his friend the governor. As for the dollar—poof! he could do without it.

Jorkins stalked away, walking quickly, as if in a hurry. De Tereul waited a few moments to allow him to get on ahead, and then followed cautiously on his trail.

CHAPTER XXXV.

KNAVES IN COUNCIL.

JORKINS was bound for the quay. There he engaged a boatman, and directed him to row to the *Rattlesnake*. He was soon alongside, parleying with a rough fellow who was looking over the side. His request to be allowed to come on board was not immediately granted.

"But I am known to your captain," he urged; "tell him that Jorkins is here. He will see me. I have something important to say to him."

"My orders are not to allow any stranger to come on board," was the answer.

"Can't you take my name to him?" said Jorkins. "What's the matter with you that you are afraid of one man? I shall wait here until I do see him."

He sat down resolutely in the stern of the boat. The man above called another to him, and dispatched him to the cabin where Wickram and Narragua were together. In a few minutes he returned, with the request that Jorkins would come on board, smart.

A ladder was tossed over the side, and he climbed on deck. At the first glance there was nothing seen to betray the real character of the vessel. None of the men lounging about carried arms, and the deck was strewn with the lumber of a slovenly managed craft.

But a closer examination showed that there were close-fitting panels in her sides that could be easily removed and small ship-guns run out. Under the lumber so carelessly tossed about were the metal runs for the wheels, and sundry fittings of a minor nature.

Jorkins understood it all, and smiled in a quiet way as he was conducted to the cabin. The two men there eyed him with no special favour. He was a stranger to Narragua, but since he sent his message down Wickram had enlightened the Portuguese about the connection he had with his old associate.

"I think this may be put down as a surprise," said Wickram. "How came you here, and who told you I was on board the *Rattlesnake*?"

His manner was curt. It was clear that he viewed the coming of Jorkins in the light of a disagreeable event.

"A fellow you saw ashore told me about you," replied Jorkins sulkily. "I thought you would be glad to see me; but if my company's not wanted, I can go back. I've friends ashore who will take care of me."

"Oh, friends ashore," said Wickram, with a quick

glance at the Portuguese, who was smoking a cigar with an air of indifference; "who may they be?"

"Some relatives of mine who've settled here," said Jorkins, "not of our sort. You want to know how I got here? I came as far as the Falklands in the *Daphne*, or *Nugget*—it is the same thing. Then, having no taste for the company on her, I cleared out secretly, and took passage on the *Bird of Freedom* to here."

"Why stop here?"

"Because I knew you meant to have a try to get here and intercept the *Daphne*."

"Our friend is shrewd," remarked the Portuguese.

"Jorkins," said Wickram, after a short silence, "you were a man I never liked. There was always something hidden in you. Never once did you go the whole hog with us in anything. But I confess I like your leaving the *Daphne*. It shows you up in a better light."

"You can trust me or not as you like," said Jorkins; "but if you show your teeth, I can spoil your venture. It's no use looking like that. Suppose you shot me down, there are others ashore who will act for me. The question is, will you take me in your venture or not?"

The face of Wickram assumed a very friendly expression. He held out his hand.

"Shake, Jorkins," he said; "I see I was mistaken in you. You come in as an old friend."

"No, I won't shake," said Jorkins, holding back, "until you are certain about me. You'll have proof of my intentions before long, I hope."

"As you like," said Wickram. (The Portuguese smiled superciliously, as if he despised the unnecessary compunctions of Jorkins in shaking hands while a possible doubt remained of his sincerity.) "We've been talking over what the *Daphne* may do. It has occurred to me she may not come here, but put in at Buenos Ayres. They are a cunning lot on board her."

"Yes," said Jorkins, affirmatively.

"Buenos Ayres doesn't suit the *Rattlesnake*," pursued Wickram; "a British cruiser is there. Here, at the present time, there is only a petty gunboat. We want an agent at Buenos Ayres to wire to us if the *Daphne* puts in there."

"And then you can come and capture her?"

"No. We shall stand out to sea, and know where to wait for her. She couldn't get away from the *Rattlesnake* in open water. You must go to Buenos Ayres, wire to us the moment the *Daphne* puts in, and take steamer over. You will be in time to leave with us."

"If you wait," said Jorkins discontentedly; "but how do I know you will do so?"

"You will then have time, if we deceive you, to wire back and put the cruiser on our trail."

"Ample time," said the Portuguese.

"I'll go," said Jorkins, "and at once. There's a steamer goes in about an hour."

"Have a drink before you go," said Wickram.

"No. Nothing that way until I've proved to you and others what I am."

He left the door, closing it with a snap, as if in great haste. Narragua shrugged his shoulders as he flicked the ash from his cigar.

"You don't care for the extra partner," said Wickram; "no more do I. But it would be dangerous to refuse him admission."

"We can still leave him behind."

"That would be folly. We will wait for him. There will be ample time, and when out at sea we can put an end to the partnership."

Narragua stretched out his hand, and Wickram grasped it. They understood each other.

"You have the right blood in you," said Narragua.

"He brings it on himself," said Wickram; "but I never liked him. He was always odd—a bit soft—talked as if he was sorry for something, and that's the sort of man I *hate*."

He meant it, if his looks went for anything. Towner Wickram, being a cold-blooded rascal, to whom remorse was a stranger, hated all who were, from his point of view, weak enough to see the error of their ways and repent of things that would have been better left undone.

"But hang his weakness," he added, "so long as he

fills the post I've put him in. Neither he nor any of the lot on the yacht will live to share old Sutter's hoard. You and I alone, Narragua, you and I—no others."

"Assuredly," said the Portuguese.

But despite this assurance each had in his mind a scheme whereby he would eventually become the sole possessor of the treasure. But it was as yet afar off, and meanwhile they could only wait the development of events.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE "DAPHNE" AT BUENOS AYRES.

AFTER delays, storms, calms, and other things that trouble those who go down to the sea in ships, the *Daphne* arrived in the harbour of Buenos Ayres. The wind was in the west, and the water, never very deep, was too shallow to allow them to anchor close to the town without getting mixed up with trading vessels, many of which lay like monsters stranded, with only a few feet of the sea above their keels.

The *Daphne* had need of rest, and a time to repair and recruit the health of some of the men who were sick from the arduous nature of their duties. Santioff in his cell affected to be very ill, and had at least sunk down to the dead level of hopelessness.

"Why not let me go?" he said to Ralph, who visited him on the day they dropped anchor. "I have been sufficiently punished, and I swear that I will go up the country and never return. All I want is the free air."

"Our resolve is to take you home to the place from whence you stole the *Daphne*," answered Ralph firmly.

"Ah!" said Santioff, with a grinding of his teeth, "for you there is everything—a lovely bride, wealth, friends, and all a man could desire. For me, the desolation of the beggar and the outcast; and yet you are not satisfied."

"It is justice that you will get, Santioff, and no more."

"As you show mercy to me so may it be meted out to you anon."

"Had you been a common thief," said Ralph, "I might have pardoned you. But I treated you as a friend—trusted you with a faith that not even the doubts of my closest friend, Lyon Lyster, could shake. He mistrusted you always."

"Which shows he had a better head than you. Neither of you have a heart."

He urged and gibed in vain. Ralph was imbued with a strong sense of justice. It was only right that he should free society from such a man as Santioff for some years to come. He had courted a prison, deserved it, and to that prison he should go, if careful watching could keep him till they reached old England.

The confinement had wrought a change in Santioff. He was thinner, wan of countenance, broken to a great extent in spirit. The bravado of the man was

outwardly gone. But all that he had lost only needed a few hours of free life to return to him.

An official came on board and looked at the papers of the *Daphne*. Fortunately they were of a nature to carry the yacht anywhere as a pleasure craft. Santioff had retained them in case they might be wanted. This was the first occasion they were required. The change of name he would have accounted for, but with our friends there was no explanation to make. The old name had been restored.

A portion of the crew obtained leave to go ashore. Among them were Mutton and Blower, who were fast friends. Buenos Ayres is a big town, with a considerable European population, merchants and settlers, and very different from Monte Video. It was thought they could spend a few hours there in perfect safety.

On landing they strolled into the streets, where the mixed peoples were in ample evidence. The strong indications of Spanish origin gave the place a spice of novelty. The well-built houses gleamed white in the sunlight, relieved by the striped window-blinds fixed outside. In the balconies lounged the women and children, watching the stream of men going to and fro.

There was an abundance of fruit, sold by negroes, some with stalls at the corners of the streets, others carrying grapes, figs, melons, and nuts in rush baskets on their heads, uttering a shrill cry to announce their calling as they strode along.

Once more there was evidence of the preciousness of water, for all this teeming population was supplied by crude water-carts without springs, on which huge barrels were fixed. But as the women came out with buckets to purchase a daily supply, it ran green, and was not inviting as a drink.

"For outward use only" might have been inscribed on the water-carts. But it may not have been of much value, for, save with the better classes, the outward use of it was honoured more in the breach than in the observance.

"It's a pretty place," said Mutton, as he stopped to wipe his heated brow; "the sun is shinier here than at home, but give me Little Crampton to live in."

Blower might have said something both appropriate and in harmony with Mutton's sentiments in reply, but for a hand being laid upon his shoulder. He turned and saw Jorkins. Without indulging in any fanciful illustration of the effect of seeing the man, we can assert that Blower lost his breath, powers of speech, and was in imminent danger of losing his senses altogether.

"You are surprised to see me," said Jorkins.

Mutton was feeling in his pocket for a coin to buy some grapes of a negro, and heard the voice. He likewise recognized it, and his face presented a fair match to that of Blower when he turned round, making his wooden leg a pivot.

"I've been here some time," said Jorkins, in a

matter-of-fact way. "You have been a long time following me."

"We come as quick as we could," said Blower feebly. "You—you are looking wonderfully well."

"I was never ill—of body—in my life," said Jorkins. "Are all in good health?"

"Middlin'," said Mutton.

"Santioff still with you?"

"He is—where you left him."

"Keep the hound close. He is not without friends here. Will you put in at Monte Video?"

"I must refer you to the captain for information on that point," said Blower, with strained politeness.

Jorkins laughed in his dry fashion.

"As ever," he said, "you mistrust me. Is young Bertie all right?"

"He couldn't be righter," said Mutton; "so are we all. You will excuse us, as we have a lot to do."

"At least shake hands," urged Jorkins grimly.

They made no advance towards reciprocation, and he thrust his hands into his pockets.

"Never mind," he said, "I will shake hands with you when I come on board the *Daphne*."

"If I was you," rejoined Blower, "I wouldn't come."

"But I must and will," said Jorkins, with eyes that flashed as if they were steel reflecting a gleam of lightning, "not here, but when you get to sea again. You had better say nothing about having met me."

He walked off with an offended air, leaving the

two men much troubled in their minds. Perhaps after all they ought to have been more glad to see him and invited him on board.

"Mister Bertie was sorry when he bolted away at the Falklands," said Blower; "we may get into trouble if we say anything about this meeting. But he's got evil designs on us—he looks like it."

Jorkins vanished round the nearest corner without looking back. In the broad street he entered there was a post office connected with the telegraph service. He passed in, asked for a telegram form, and wrote upon it: "The Captain of the *Rattlesnake*, Monte Video harbour. The *D.* is here, and cannot sail for a week. Wait further from me.—J."

He dispatched the message, and strolled out again in the listless way of a man who has nothing to do. From the post office he went to the house of the British consul, near the government offices. After a moment's hesitation he went in.

A clerk seated at a table asked him what he wanted. Jorkins took off his hat, and fumbled with it in an embarrassed manner, ere he replied,—

"I want some information about the cruiser in the harbour. Is her captain on board?"

"No; he is staying up country at the hacienda of Don Pavo Floretta."

"But he will be back soon?"

"Not for a fortnight at least. The first lieutenant is in command."

"Thank you."

Jorkins was going out when the clerk called him back.

"Why are you so curious about the captain of the *Firefly's* movements?"

"I merely wish to see him, but I can wait. At the hacienda of Don—Don—?"

"Pavo Floretta."

"Thank you again; I will not forget. I will see him there."

As he left the consulate a carriage went swiftly by. In it were seated Lyon, Ralph, Carrie, and Bertie. They were going for a drive through the level country beyond the town as an enjoyable change after so much voyaging.

He looked after them with knitted brows, and stood still for a minute or so meditating.

"Why not?" he said; "they cannot kill me outright. They would not anyway. Even Santioff is to have a fair trial. I'll go."

It was his purpose to go on board the *Daphne* while its officers were away and see the man who was responsible for his leaving the yacht at the Falklands—Gruff to wit. Boats on hire were plentiful, and one was soon bearing towards the yacht, with Jorkins calmly smoking his pipe as he sat in the stern and steered.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

JORKINS IS REINSTATED ON THE "DAPHNE."

GRUFF was added to the list of astonished persons when he saw Jorkins coolly step on to the deck of the *Daphne*. Notwithstanding the reproof of Bertie, he never felt less than glad that the man was gone. Of all things improbable in sublunary matters, he never expected to see him again.

But there he was, in the flesh, and in precisely the same clothes, the worse for wear, but in that stationary age when another year or two of use makes no observable change in the strong material of which they are made.

Some people are like apparel of this description. They age up to a given point, and then remain unchanged for quite a long period of time. But when the break-up begins, the process is rapid and complete.

"Gruff," said Jorkins, "I want a quiet talk with you."

"I've got a cabin," said Gruff, "come down there, if it's pertiklar."

"It is," said Jorkins emphatically.

They went below, and were there a long time. Whatever took place, it had the result of restoring the old feeling between the boatswain and Jorkins. It being about time to change the guard in care of Santioff, they went to his cell together.

As was customary, Gruff opened the door to have a word with the prisoner, who, on the grounds of poor health, was supposed to require extra attention.

"I thought you were gone," said Santioff to Jorkins, "thrown overboard like carrion."

"I've come back more like the vulture," replied Jorkins; "I scent my prey."

There was a significance in his look as he uttered these words that caused Santioff to sit up and look closer at him. Their eyes met, and on the face of the Spaniard there dawned a puzzled air.

"As a vulture—your prey," he muttered; "you speak in a parable I do not understand."

Jorkins turned away and left the cell. Santioff required nothing, and was left alone to think over the strange remark of Wickram's agent. A vulture seeking his prey: what did it mean? Santioff could not understand it.

By-and-by, as evening drew nigh, Lyon and his companions returned. They were all glad to see Jorkins, and more surprised even than any had yet

been to find him and Gruff on the best of terms. To Blower and Mutton it was equivalent to a knock-down blow.

"He's bewitched old Gruff," said Blower—"got him fairly in the coils of negromancers. If we go to sea with him, we may as well have our hammocks up for making into shrouds. Mutton, that there Jorkins have got the evil eye."

"I never see another evil eye to compare with it," said Mutton, after a moment's reflection, "but I'll take your word for it. And Gruff was dead against him, worked him out for the good of the ship, and now their chuminess is almost sickening."

It certainly astonished the whole crew to see Gruff and Jorkins having an evening pipe together on the forecastle; but this was nothing to what took place in the morning, when the boatswain got leave for a day off, and he and Jorkins went ashore in company.

"We shall never see old Gruff again," said Blower; "that Jorkins have wove a spell about him and carried him away to his *doom*."

"Where did you get that doom notion from?" asked Mutton.

"From a book a chap once read to me in the winter evenings. It came out in penny numbers, and was titled 'The Magician's Revenge.' A common sort of party offended him, and the magician came one day and sperrited him away. He took him to a lonely

spot in the mountains and killed him by inches—*inches*. I thought it was a lovely tale at the time."

"Lovely to read about," said Mutton doubtfully.

While Blower was venting his fears on Gruff's account, Bertie was being subjected to a little banter from his friends.

"You've got your Jorkins back again," said Lyon, "and he'll be able to let you know where the lost gold is."

"I spoke to him this morning," said Bertie, raising his nose a fraction, "and he repeated his promise. I believe in Jorkins."

"Well," said Ralph, "it isn't far to go back, certainly."

"You needn't come," said Bertie; "Jorkins and I can work it without help."

"Did he tell you that?" asked Carrie.

"He did," replied Bertie.

"The faith of youth is boundless," said Lyon. "It is all right, Bertie; don't be angry. Find the gold, and it is yours—subject, of course, to the commission charged by Jorkins."

Bertie took up a book and went on deck to read. He was himself rather astonished at the blind faith he had in Jorkins, but it was not to be shaken off. It clung to him with a tenacity that was incomprehensible. It had never left him, even when Jorkins went away.

"I shall see him again," Bertie often said, as they

came towards Buenos Ayres, and there he was. But others could not look at it in the light the boy viewed it. They had no faith in the promise, blind or otherwise.

Gruff sent a lot of odd stores on board during the day, and the men were busy painting and burnishing the *Daphne*, so as to restore the yacht to her original grace and beauty. It was long after dark when Gruff returned, and he came alone.

"Where's Jorkins?" asked Bertie, who was on deck.

"He's going to spend the night with a friend," answered Gruff, "and he may not be back to-morrow."

Nothing more was to be got out of Gruff. He could not, would not name the friend, or go into the details of how he spent the day, otherwise than in purchasing certain requisites as instructed to do by Lyon.

Bertie asked him if he had again quarrelled with Jorkins? He answered in the negative.

"We are uncommon good friends," he said, "and will remain so, if ever we meet again."

"What is all this mystery about?" asked Bertie testily.

"Is there any mystery, sir?" Gruff returned. "Jorkins has the right to go where he pleases."

"Certainly," muttered Bertie; "but I don't understand his going off in this way."

"Blower says he's a negromancer, sir, and can melt away, and all that sort of thing."

"Blower is a donkey, and you needn't trouble me with his ridiculous conclusions."

Having thus expressed his opinion of Blower and his assumptions, Bertie went away to his berth. Gruff turned in also until the morning watch.

Two callers came to the *Daphne* the next day. One was Captain Lawrence of the *Firefly*, the other was Don Pavo Floretta. The captain of the *Firefly* was an old friend of Lyon's father, and the Don was a friend he had made in Buenos Ayres. Their declared object in calling was to make the stay of the *Daphne* people as pleasant as possible.

"And why not come to my hacienda?" said the Don, "while all this painting and washing is going on. You are welcome, and we are glad to have English visitors as a relief to the monotony of our lives."

It only remained to be assured of the safe keeping of Santioff, and Gruff promised to see to that. Then the welcome invitation was accepted.

"Come at once—this afternoon," said the Don at parting; "we are always prepared for guests."

He was a handsome, courtly man, past the prime of life, but hale and upright in carriage. His manners were most winning, and a happy time on shore seemed to be in store. The *Daphne* could be got ready in a day or two; but why should her departure be hurried for a week?

That was a question they asked of each other after their visitors were gone. It was Carrie who raised the only possible objection.

"It seems to me," she said, "that Captain Lawrence has some object in getting us ashore."

"What object can he have, my dear Carrie?" asked Ralph.

"I don't know. I felt instinctively that there was something more than courtesy in the way he supported the invitation of Don Floretta."

"Women trust too much to their instincts perhaps."

"They rarely fail them. But as you have accepted the invitation we will go."

"The Don has a family," said Lyon; "he spoke of his girls. We must take the usual society rig with us."

This was agreed to, and three portmanteaus and a box of considerable dimensions were packed, the latter with dresses for Carrie. Late in the afternoon they went ashore, and a hired carriage was engaged to convey them to the hacienda of Don Floretta.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

AT THE HACIENDA.

THERE is not perhaps in the world a wider tract of level ground than that which lies west of Buenos Ayres. Right away to the far Andes it is almost as flat as if some huge roller had passed over it, smoothing down all projections. It is practically one huge plain, and for a vast distance beyond the town the woods are few. For fuel there is little beyond the stunted bushes and dried thistles of gigantic size.

Owing to the porous nature of the soil, there are no rivers to speak of. The rain falls and soaks into the ground ere it can form brooks and streams, as in more favoured countries.

Nevertheless, the inhabitants contrive to make life enjoyable there. By sinking wells they obtain water, horses are abundant and cheap, and the ground handsomely pays for the easiest forms of cultivation. The hacienda of Don Floretta was to all intents and purposes a village, with a well-built, one-storied

house, roomy and convenient, in the centre, and around it were the huts and houses of his large staff of servants.

The garden of the hacienda was of the proportions a rich man may indulge in with an unlimited area of ground at his command. It was well cultivated with fruit and flowers. The furniture of the interior of the house was of the best, purchased in Europe, and brought over regardless of the outlay.

When the Don said they were always prepared for friends, he spoke an apparent truth. The visitors were received by the señora, his wife, and two charming young women, her daughters, with an affability that cast away all doubts of their being welcome. The latter were introduced as Inez and Lucelle.

The servants were all black or half-caste. There were so many of them that if ill-trained they would have got into each other's way. But there was no confusion. Each had his or her appointed work, which, if leisurely carried out, was perfectly performed.

Captain Lawrence had already been there a week. It was soon discovered that he was paying attention to Inez. There were some twenty years between them, but the known fact that women of the country early grow old, minimized the apparent discordance of their ages. As Inez said in confidence to Carrie, whom she introduced to her room, "In ten years I shall be as old as my husband."

The first night spent at the hacienda was a thing to remember as a dream. They dined under the veranda, and afterwards sat in the garden in the light of the stars, enjoying the cool air. There was no damp, for it "was not the season of the dew," as the señora said.

There was singing with accompaniments on the guitar and mandoline. In a colder clime these instruments might have failed to please, especially in the hands of less skilful performers. But there, in the still, soft air, and the dreamy solitude of the surrounding country, they were delightful to the ear.

The Don and his wife were all courtesy, nothing was lacking, and it was not until a late hour that they retired to rest.

In the morning they were up betimes. Horses were brought out and a ride suggested.

"We might go down and see if the *Daphne* is all right," said Lyon.

"Why go into the town when you will see more of it by-and-by?" urged Captain Lawrence. "Let us enjoy a ride upon the plain. You may go on for a week and nobody say you are trespassing."

"We have not yet wiped out all the aborigines," said the Don quietly; "sometimes they come boldly down to within twenty miles from here. It is of rare occurrence, but they have done so."

"They have good horses, but not so good as yours, Don," said Captain Lawrence.

"No; I buy the best I can get from England," was the reply.

Carrie had no riding-habit with her, but Inez lent her one. She came down early ready for the ride, and found Ralph, earlier still, waiting for her.

"Captain Lawrence does not wish us to go into the town," she said.

"He gave his reason, my love," replied Ralph.

"There is something going on we ought to know of," said Carrie.

Ralph smiled. He believed her fears to be entirely groundless. The others soon appeared; they were all going. Horses were brought, and away they went over the plain, vast, and with a line of horizon as level as the open sea.

"There is no fear of our being taken by surprise," said Inez to Carrie. "I have ridden out forty miles alone."

"And met with no danger?" exclaimed Carrie.

"Once I was pursued by a number of aborigines, but my horse was better than theirs. The greatest peril I ever was in was when a herd of our own horses stampeded and came tearing down upon me. Occasionally they go quite wild, for no known reason. Having no riders on their backs, they fly rather than gallop. I turned my horse and rode with them. If I hadn't done so, they would have thrown me over and trampled me to death. Ah, it was an experience to ride in the thick of that wild-eyed, snorting throng."

"How were you saved?"

"By their tiring. The fit of madness comes on in a moment, and dies away almost as quickly. They stopped as if by some arranged signal. Some lay down to rest, others took to grazing, and I rode quietly home."

Carrie looked at the slim figure and the delicate face, and wondered how she could have passed through such an ordeal and lived to tell the tale. Then her mind reverted to the apparent efforts of Captain Lawrence to keep them from the town, and she was again uneasy. They rode so far out that it would be late in the day ere they returned.

Presently Lyon came to her side, and they drew a little apart from the rest.

"I have been putting a supposititious case to Lawrence," he said, "and I learn from him that I am doing an unlawful thing in keeping Santioff a prisoner."

"What do you mean by a supposititious case, Lyon?"

"I described another vessel with a man kept on board, just as we are keeping him."

"What will you do?"

"I don't know. I must think it over."

Carrie thought she was beginning to understand now. It was known that Santioff was on the *Daphne*, and an arrangement had been made to take him away without any fuss. Perhaps he was already released. But her suspicion must be confirmed ere she spoke out. Bertie in turn became her companion.

"You look worried, Carrie," he said.

"It is not more than seven miles to Buenos Ayres from the hacienda," she equivocally answered.

"I won't dispute your assertion," said Bertie smiling.

"You could get up very early in the morning and walk there?"

"I needn't do that. I can have a horse if I like. The Don begs of me to make free of his stables."

"All the better. Say nothing, but be up as soon as it is light and ride into the town. See that the *Daphne* is all right. If anything unusual has happened, her flag will be lowered."

"What makes you so fidgety, Carrie?"

"Do as I ask you and don't question me. I have my suspicions, but they may not be justified."

Bertie said he would do as she wished and say nothing. He thought it a ridiculous whim; but he was very fond of Carrie, and would have done more than take an early morning ride to please her.

They returned from their long ride about four o'clock. A light meal awaited them as a preliminary to seven o'clock dinner. Again there was a delightful evening in the garden, with the addition of some part-singing by the dusky servants that was altogether unique and delightful.

We must pass over that night lightly; matters of portent demand our attention. Bertie saw that Lyon was very attentive to Lucelle, and wondered if he was going to have a Spanish sister-in-law. He was

of opinion that something worse might befall him; but neither thoughts of that nor of anything else put the business of the following morning out of his head.

He stole away early, and having made up his mind to wake before the dawn, did so, and was down to the stables at daybreak, where he found the men already at work grooming the horses. He had but to mention that he wished for one to ride, and it was got ready for him.

Mounted on a good horse, he sped away to the town, riding rather loosely in the saddle, as those who have spent months at sea are apt to do. They get used to rolling, and adopt an oscillating movement on the deck of a vessel and on the back of a horse.

Through the town, down to the sea, he went, looked towards the spot where the *Daphne* had dropped her anchor two days before, and uttered a cry of amazement.

The yacht was gone!

CHAPTER XXXIX.

A MESSAGE TO THE "RATTLESNAKE."

TOWNER WICKRAM and Narragua spent their time on board the *Rattlesnake*. They were seemingly very shy of going on shore, and none of their men had leave to absent themselves from the vessel for an hour. A sharp look-out was also kept upon the movements of an English gunboat lying in the harbour, but on the far side, away from the *Rattlesnake*.

The gunboat showed no interest in the vessel with its rakish, suspicious air. Her commander, a lieutenant, was seen lounging about the deck, or sitting at his ease reading a book, while two middies amused themselves by fishing from a small boat. The men were busy giving the vessel a coat of paint outside, suspended in chairs from the davits. Neither the Portuguese nor the Yankee saw any reason to apprehend interference from her.

But like all men engaged in an unlawful pursuit, they were ever on the watch for possible surprises; and

they were eager to speedily carry out their designs against the *Daphne*, having received from Jorkins the intimation of her arrival at Buenos Ayres.

The message was to some extent misleading, for it gave Wickram no intimation of its being in the hands of its lawful owner. Ignorant of the events that led to its recovery by Ralph Brooking, he believed it was in the possession of Santioff, and the great longing of his heart was to give his old associate a return blow, a *quid pro quo* for his treachery.

Many times he mentally pictured the sweet hour when he would have Santioff in his power. For him there would be a short time of vain repentance for his false dealing, and then a speedy consignment to the deep. It was a pleasing picture to the man who had lived a violent, lawless life, and the chief charm of it was that he could carry out his vengeance without risk. It would be a case of thief punishing thief, and nothing more.

For two days after the arrival of the message no communication came from Jorkins. This made Wickram uneasy. Entirely without faith in the honesty of living man, especially of those with whom he associated, he thought it highly probable that Jorkins, for his own ends, had doubled on him, and given information of the arrival of the *Rattlesnake* to Santioff.

Then he remembered that the postal authorities of Monte Video were somewhat lax in punctual delivery

of telegrams and letters. It might be that a message had arrived and not been delivered. To make sure, he decided on going ashore, and, as on a previous occasion, almost the first person he encountered was De Tereul.

He remembered the offer of the fellow to make himself useful. Why not entrust him with the task of inquiring at the post office? It would spare his going into the town.

He beckoned to the self-elected accredited agent, an entirely unknown position to the authorities, and gave him the requisite instructions. De Tereul merely required a dollar as an earnest of good faith, another to be given him when he returned. The money was forthcoming, and he gaily departed.

Towner Wickram waited an hour, more than sufficient for De Tereul to have performed his task, but he did not appear. The Yankee grew impatient, and after a while decided to go himself. At the post office he was told there was no message, and that De Tereul had not been there to make inquiries.

He reviled the fellow somewhat inconsistently for being true to his estimate of mankind as a body, and returned to the *Rattlesnake*. But little did he dream of the cause of De Tereul's apparent neglect. That jaunty loafer and rascal had got into trouble that threatened to deprive society of his valuable assistance.

What happened to him was this.

On his way to the post office he suddenly encountered no less a person than Adrian, that morning released from prison before the expiration of his sentence. Owing to an influx of fresh prisoners, mostly cattle and horse stealers, it had been found necessary to weed out those whose term of imprisonment was drawing to a close. Adrian was one of the fortunate number, and hence his unlooked-for liberty.

The two men met at the corner of a street near the blind thoroughfare of the Haunted Fort. De Tereul drew back sharply, and prepared to fight or fly, but was agreeably surprised by the placid, almost friendly bearing of Adrian.

"It is good to be free again," said the released rascal; "but the dogs of jailers have taken all my money. Lend me something, De Tereul, to quench my thirst with."

"I have no money," replied De Tereul, ready with a lie, "but may have some later on."

"You would have me believe that?" said Adrian dryly; "no, it will not do. Listen to me. I swore to have your life, but one softens in prison. It is not good to be pent up between stone walls. The bird that escapes from the cage goes not willingly back again. I would be friends with you; let us shake hands."

De Tereul unsuspectingly held his out, and Adrian grasped it with an iron grip. He was a powerful

man, and De Tereul was comparatively weak compared to him. The next moment he found himself being forced into the blind street.

"What would you do?" gasped De Tereul.

"You will see," said Adrian between his teeth.

De Tereul gave one cry for help, and then an arm was thrown round his neck by Adrian, and a broad, brown hand of the ruffian placed over his mouth. There was no witness to the struggle that ensued. The street was empty, and no eye looked down upon the men from the walls of the fort.

Adrian suddenly became as a man possessed. All the tiger in his dangerous nature surged to the surface. His strength was gigantic, irresistible. The wretched De Tereul was forced back, hurled to the ground, and his wits scattered by the heaviness of his fall.

He remembered no more for the time, and when he returned to a knowledge of his whereabouts he found himself lying on a damp stone floor, with the light coming from a hole in the wall ten feet above him. Through that hole was thrust the malevolent face of Adrian.

"Ah, my good friend," he said, "I have given you as good as you gave me. You will not find being here much to your taste. Cry and yell your loudest, and who will hear you? If they do, they will say it is the murdered priest come back again. Who will think it is De Tereul? Who will care?"

The terror-stricken man could not answer him; his tongue clave to the roof of his mouth. The words he would have uttered, pleading for mercy, refused to come. He understood but too well what had befallen him: Adrian had incarcerated De Tereul in the very place in which he had been imprisoned with Ralph and Lyon months before.

No doubt it was done without design. There was no planning. It was the inspiration of the moment that had led Adrian to do it; but the thing was done, and the sin of De Tereul had found him out with a vengeance.

"Ah, you dog," said Adrian gleefully, "I see you. How do you like it? You will know what it is to be caged—to fear you will die of hunger and thirst. You will beat your fists against the stone walls, and cry out until your voice is gone, and nobody will come to help you. You have not even the companions I had to climb upon and tear away the stones. No; you are alone. Perish—die little by little! I am avenged."

A husky exclamation came from the lips of De Tereul. It had no definite sound or meaning in it. He was palsied with the horror that overwhelmed him. Adrian shook his fist, dropped down, and left him to his fate.

Adrian sauntered down to the quay, and espied the *Rattlesnake*, and thought her a likely vessel in which he could find employment. Having disposed of De

Tereul, it was his intention to leave Monte Video for good. The question was, how could he get on board to see the officers? As he lingered there, a messenger wearing the postal uniform came hurrying down and hailed a boat.

"I want to go to the *Rattlesnake*," he said.

"I am bound for her too," said Adrian; "let us go together."

The messenger had no objection, and they went in company. Towner Wickram saw the boat coming, and his first word and look were for the official.

"You have a message for me," he said.

It was handed to him. He tore away the fastening, and read the few words inside:—

"The *D.* will probably go for a short cruise in the morning.—J."

He gave the messenger the postal charges and a coin for himself. The man dropped into the boat, and Adrian remained behind.

"Your pardon, sir," he said to Towner Wickram, as he was moving away.

"Who are you? What do you want?" asked Wickram.

"Employment—I would serve you."

"You seem to be a likely fellow, but we want nobody."

"Señor, the boat is gone. I am willing to work for a little—to do your bidding—no matter what it may be."

Wickram surveyed him thoughtfully. As he said, Adrian was a likely-looking fellow, in the sense that he was an undoubted ruffian, and might be made useful in many ways.

"Stay here," he said; "I will see what we can do with you."

Narragua came on deck. The message was shown to him. He sniffed at it suspiciously.

"The man says nothing about returning to us," he said.

"He may arrive before we leave. The tide will not turn for a few hours. He sends this so that we may be prepared."

"We shall see."

"You are always suspicious."

"It is as well to be so," said Narragua. "Who is this man to have faith in him? He may be laying a trap for us."

"With what? with whom?" hotly demanded Wickram; "not with Santioff, for has not three days passed, and might he not at any moment have urged him to fly? Give the *Daphne* three days at sea, and the *Rattlesnake* would have trouble to overhaul her in safe waters. Moreover, he will be here."

And so it proved. Before the tide turned the steamer from Buenos Ayres arrived, and Jorkins came ashore with other passengers. In a little while he was on board the *Rattlesnake*.

"Come down and give in your report," said Wick-

ram; "ease the mind of Narragua, who doubts your faithfulness."

Jorkins gave him a strange look as he followed him below. The Portuguese favoured him with a nod of welcome.

"The *Daphne* goes for a cruise in the morning," said Wickram; "not to leave entirely, but for a trip?"

"No," said Jorkins, whose manner was rather constrained. His face was almost colourless, and he seemed to be in a state of pent-up excitement. But as the conversation proceeded, he grew calmer. "I was mistaken. It will be the day after."

"She is not going away for good then?" said the Portuguese.

"Not as I understand. But it will be as well for you to be in a position to intercept her."

"You have seen Santioff?" said Wickram.

"Yes, and talked with him. He has no thought of your being so near him."

"Good. We shall be able to surprise the traitor," said the Yankee, rubbing his hands.

"The meeting will cause him the greatest astonishment," said Jorkins. "You will not spare him, or any on board?"

"None—everything but the precious cargo goes down to amuse the fishes."

"Up to now we have not talked of my share of the gold," said Jorkins, in a hesitating way. "What is it to be?"

"A third," said Wickram. "What say you, Nar-ragua?"

"A third, decidedly," said the Portuguese, yawning. "He has earned it."

Jorkins soon after left them, and wandered about the *Rattlesnake*. On the lower deck some of the crew were unpacking some small ship-guns, old-fashioned twelve pounders, not formidable when compared with modern marine artillery, but sufficiently effective when dealing with a helpless craft like the *Daphne*.

Jorkins was much interested in them. He knew nothing of big guns, he said, having lived nearly all his life ashore, and the greater part of it in the lonely districts of America. There were five pieces, two for each side of the *Rattlesnake*, and a bow gun, and Jorkins in a delighted way hung about them as they were being cleaned and fixed on their carriages.

As soon as the *Rattlesnake* got well out to sea the guns would be hoisted to the upper deck ready for use. Jorkins opined that one shot from them would make any ordinary trader lie to.

"A shot would go through a yacht I know of, like an arrow piercing a sheet of paper," he said.

"At a short range," the men told him; "but the guns are useless for any distance over half a mile."

All the time between his arrival and the turn of the tide Jorkins kept hovering about the guns as one

fascinated. It amused the men to see him fondling them, and hear his exclamations of delight.

"I've never heard anything bigger than a rifle fired," he said. "What a treat it will be to me to hear these creatures bark, especially at the vessel we are going to meet!"

The men knew nothing of the details of the project in the minds of their leaders. But whatever it was they were willing to take a share in it, as the promised pay was good. They looked upon Jorkins as a sort of land-lubber, and his manner as he hovered about the guns was really childish.

Altogether his bearing since he returned to the *Rattlesnake* was very strange.

CHAPTER XL

BERTIE'S MYSTERIOUS LETTER.

IT was breakfast time at the hacienda, and all but Bertie had assembled. It was known to Don Pavo Floretta that his youngest guest had ridden out early in the morning, and he mentioned it in response to a remark from Inez.

"A boy of mettle," he said, "will live on horseback if he has the chance."

Carrie alone knew whither Bertie went so early. She was getting anxious about him. Surely some mishap had befallen him, or he would have returned long before. But she forbore to give expression to her feelings, in case there should prove to be no cause for alarm.

As breakfast drew near its termination, a servant appeared with a small folded piece of paper on a salver. He handed it to Carrie, who opened it and found it was from Bertie.

"DEAREST CARRIE,—I shall not be back to-day. Don't be worried about me. Everything is right.

Make my apologies to Don Floretta for keeping his horse here. I have seen that it is well stabled and will be cared for. Once more, don't bother about me. Your loving brother, BERTIE."

What could have induced him to stay in Buenos Ayres?

What could she do but read the letter aloud, and offer the needed apology to the Don, who smiled good-humouredly, and said the horse would be well taken care of. Captain Lawrence listened with knitted brows, but offered no remark.

Lyon and Ralph were very angry with Bertie. They attributed his going to Buenos Ayres and staying there to some boyish freak. It was, at the very least, disrespectful to their host.

As the party left the table, Captain Lawrence drew up to Carrie, and in an undertone asked her to meet him in the garden. He wished to have a talk with her.

Carrie, astonished, consented, and named a quiet spot where they could talk together in the seclusion of a group of stunted palms that was one of the notable features of the grounds. There they met, choosing a time when Ralph and Lyon with their host visited the stables.

"My reason for asking you to meet me," said the captain, "is to put your mind at rest about your brother. You sent him to Buenos Ayres, of course?"

"What induces you to think so?" she inquired.

"The expression of your face," he answered, "as you read the letter. It lacked the element of complete surprise. Am I right?"

"Yes. I was uneasy about the *Daphne*."

"Not without cause, as I have reason to know, but not while she is at anchor. Certain things came to my knowledge from a source I need not dwell upon now, which led me to take a course of action which in the end will, I hope, meet with your entire approval. I entrusted the officer in command of the *Firefly* in my absence to look after her. He has sent some men on board, and this morning they took her to sea."

"But you tell me that she would be safe at anchor. Will not this step put her in peril of a nature I know nothing of? And may I, without giving offence, consider that a liberty has been taken with Mr. Brooking's yacht?"

"I did it for the best, and I believe my scheme will turn out well. It was necessary to do it to catch an old offender in an act equivalent to piracy. It was also done with the view of sparing you and your friends the danger of defending yourselves against a too powerful enemy."

"Can you be more explicit? It would relieve me, Captain Lawrence."

"I can. But I rely upon you to be reticent until we receive news of the success of my arrangements."

A certain man came to me with the information that the *Daphne* had something on board that was coveted by a piratical craft lying at Monte Video. I could have sent instructions to a gunboat there to seize the vessel; but as there would be nothing perhaps to prove her real character, or to reveal her avowed object, I decided to play what vulgar people call an artful game. The gunboat was directed to ignore the presence of the pirate, and the *Daphne* in due time was to put to sea and practically throw herself in the way of the other—the commanders, a Portuguese and an American, being warned of her departure. The pirate will intercept its presumed prey, make an attack upon her, and fail. That is all I desire to tell you for the present. You will not be long kept in a state of anxiety. Before night I hope to have a message that the programme has been carried out to my entire satisfaction."

"I am in a maze," exclaimed Carrie.

"From which I will assuredly speedily release you," Captain Lawrence answered, with a smile.

He took her hand, and, smiling, bade her keep her mind at rest. As they stood thus together, Inez suddenly appeared, and regarded them with scornful, flashing eyes.

"It is well," she said; "I thought you English were too cold to be false to those you love."

"My dear Inez," pleaded the dismayed captain, "you do not understand. I assure you—"

"I understand enough," she interposed. "Am I blind? And where is *her* lover that he should leave her at the mercy of any wooer?"

"Inez," he said gently, "you are mistaken. At least wait a few hours before you entirely condemn me."

"How much time?" she asked derisively.

"Till this evening; no longer. If you are not satisfied then, I will leave you and never trouble you more."

"What do you say?" Inez demanded of Carrie.

"My dear Inez," replied Carrie, with a smile, "I regret nothing so much as your poor opinion of me. Captain Lawrence was endeavouring to put my mind at rest about my brother."

"Yes, yes, of course. There is always an excuse."

The jealousy of the young Spanish woman was not to be abated by mild protest. Captain Lawrence indulged in a gesture of despair.

"If it must be so," he said, "I cannot help it. I intended nothing more than to carry out a plan suggested by my informant. It served my purpose, it is true, to fall in with him, but there is no altering matters now. I will go to the town and stay there, until I am told by you I may return."

He raised his hat, and left the two women together. Carrie bore herself well under the ordeal of the angry looks of Inez.

"He will remain there for a year—a century—and I will not send for him," said his betrothed.

"He is nothing to me," said Carrie. "Shall I tell you all that took place between us?"

"I have no time to listen," said Inez, as she turned and walked away.

"How disagreeable things are becoming!" thought Carrie; "but I will do as he wishes, and wait."

She lingered in the grounds for an hour, and then sauntered back to the house. Inez was seated under the veranda lightly tinkling her guitar. She rose up quickly, laid the instrument aside, and ran to Carrie. Throwing her arms about her neck, she kissed her.

"Forgive," she pleaded; "I was foolish. We are alone. They are all gone but you and me."

"More mystery," said Carrie.

"I have a note from your lover," said Inez, as she brought it out of her pocket. "He gave it to me as he was going."

Carrie opened the folded paper and read the following:—

"DEAREST,—Captain Lawrence has thought fit to make a communication to me. I would tell you what it was, if you had not kept your little secret from me. May I have one little jest at your expense. Good-bye, my love, for a few hours. Yours ever,

"RALPH."

"What can have taken them all away?" mused Carrie.

"What does it matter, dear?" said Inez. "You see it all came of my stupid jealousy. My lover had to explain, and I told him he must do penance by going away for the day. They all went but you and me to keep him company in his banishment. You do not believe that? Quite right. It is not the exact truth. Mother and Lucelle have some shopping to do, or they would not have gone. The men have business of their own. Come and see my aviary. It is feeding time, and the birds are chirping for me. Our birds, alas, do not sing as they do in your own sweet country."

She put her arm around Carrie, and they entered the house in which the aviary was built, and spent an hour with a charming variety of feathered creatures.

CHAPTER XLI.

ON BOARD THE "DAPHNE."

GRUFF stood beside the helmsman directing him the course to take. The yacht was being steered north-east-by-north, in an almost direct line for Monte Video. The men of the watch stood forward, whispering among themselves. Blower wandered round the deck troubled in his mind, for he verily believed the boatswain had gone mad.

Early that morning a big boatload of sailors came on board. They were commanded by a rugged seaman, who might, judging by his appearance, have been brother to Gruff. The entire party immediately went below, where they made themselves at home. Asked why they came, they said they didn't know, but expected they would have to look after the yacht and all upon her. Blower sought out Gruff, and asked who sent the men.

"Their officer of course," he said; "we may want their protection out at sea."

"Who's going to sea?" demanded Blower.

"We are—'mediately," returned Gruff.

The amazed Blower heard him give orders to raise the anchor and let out the sails. The men obeyed him, as in duty bound, but with faces that expressed their wonderment. What could Blower think? He could only fall back on his old conviction, that Gruff was the victim of the "negromancer's" arts, as practised by the departed Jorkins.

Mutton was inclined to think "Gruff had gone wrong somehow." Or perhaps he had mutinied, and intended to steal the *Daphne*. As for the seamen who had come on board, they wore the dress of Her Majesty's navy it was true, but might not they be disguised confederates of Gruff's?

"Santioff stole the *Daphne* on one side of the world," said Mutton, "may not Gruff have made up his mind to steal it on the other?"

"Not if he's in his right senses," averred Blower. "Look at his eye. It isn't nateral."

There was nothing the matter with the eyes of Gruff beyond their showing a little eagerness, as he surveyed the horizon. Not a vessel was in sight, and he ordered all sail to be crowded on so as to make the most of the morning wind.

"She ought to soon show herself," Blower heard him mutter.

The *Daphne* raced over the sea a few miles more. Then the look-out reported the smoke of a steamer on the starboard side. Gruff unslung a pair of binoculars

he carried round his back,—Blower observed they were Lyon Lyster's own glasses,—and took a long look at the broken trail of smoke showing above the horizon.

"That's t'other one," muttered Gruff; "a bit early, but she's standing orf, abiding her time."

"What is he talking about?" Blower asked Mutton in an undertone. They were standing behind the boatswain, but softly as he spoke Gruff overheard him.

"What am I talking about?" he repeated, as he wheeled about; "things as have been arranged, and which don't concern you. I knows what you think, Blower. You look on me as daft. But may you ever have as good a head as mine is now, which would be an improvement on what you've had to carry about up to this time."

"I beg your pardon, Mister Gruff," pleaded Blower; "no offence, I hope."

"Not much," said Gruff curtly; "only don't make a fool of yourself."

He faced to the north again. Suddenly he called out for the helmsman to put the helm hard over, and set the men aloft to wear. Away miles to the north was the canvas of a vessel bearing towards them.

They could not see her hull as yet, but that it was a fast craft was evident. She seemed to grow before their eyes.

In the west, the smoke of the steamer showed she was travelling parallel to the *Daphne's* original course;

but when she went about, it kept straight on for a mile or so, and then bore in at an angle, as if to intercept the approaching vessel.

Then again, as Blower watched, he saw the steamer bear away until she was hull down. But in a little while it was again above the horizon line. Altogether it seemed that it was a very eccentrically managed steamer.

But there was no shilly-shallying on the part of the approaching sailing vessel. She was bearing straight down towards the *Daphne*, her bow, black as ebony, gradually coming out in bold relief against the white-capped waves through which she ploughed her way.

"I never see a pretty craft that looked more ugly," said Blower paradoxically.

"She is an ugly customer, I don't doubt," said Gruff.

"Might be a pirate, you think?"

"I'm not in doubt about it. She's got a cut-throat lot on board there."

"She's overhauling us."

"She is," said Gruff, as he turned his binoculars towards the steamer, now on the other side of the advancing sailing vessel.

That eccentric craft was coming up, as if bent on crossing the stern of the other. But there were at least six or seven miles between them, and it could not be said for certain what course she was really taking. It might be she was possibly bearing a little away, or creeping in nearer, and by her hull it was seen she was no common trader, but a smart sea-going vessel.

"We shall be overhauled under the hour," said Gruff with an air of satisfaction; "then, friend Blower, the fun will begin."

"I can't say," replied Blower, "that I see where the fun comes in."

"I came out to meet her," said Gruff; "the men below are here in case of something going wrong. They won't be called upon to act unless it's necessary."

"Who's in that ship?" said Blower, with a gasp, pointing to the sailing craft.

"Old friends of Santioff," replied Gruff. "Her name's the *Rattlesnake*, and she's got forty rascals aboard. Big guns, too, and Jorkins is there seeing to 'em."

Blower put his hand to his head. Gruff assuredly was talking like a madman. It looked as if he were in conspiracy with Jorkins to get possession of the *Daphne*. Blower could see no other solution to Gruff's unaccountable conduct.

"Keep her closer to the wind," cried Gruff; "she's going too fast. We could run afore the *Rattlesnake* for a day at this rate."

The helmsman obeyed orders with the nonchalance of one who did as he was told, conscious that he was not responsible for the consequences. Blower hurried from the deck, followed by Mutton, and they sought refuge in the forecastle berths.

"Gone clean orf," cried Blower; "he's either a madman or a villain, and we are as good as dead men."

CHAPTER XLII.

ON BOARD THE "RATTLESNAKE."

"JORKINS, you are a faithful partner !"

Towner Wickram clapped the sad-faced man on the back as he conferred this eulogium upon him. Jorkins made no answer. His eyes were on the *Daphne*, which they were fast overhauling.

"Santioff may run," continued Wickram, "but it's not in that boat to make the chase a long one, stern-chase though it may be."

"You haven't caught her yet," said Jorkins ; "it seems to me she isn't making all the sail she could if she liked to do her best. They are keeping her too close to the wind. I'm not much of a sailor, but I can see that."

Wickram was no better sailor than Jorkins. Perhaps he was not so good, or he would have before noticed what was now pointed out to him. It had been observed by Narragua, who was standing close by them.

"It is true," he said ; "she hangs as if waiting for us. Has she any big guns ?"

"None," said Wickram; "she isn't made for them, and hadn't such a thing on board. The men have small arms."

"And there are only ten of them?"

"No more."

Narragua raised his telescope and brought it to bear on the *Daphne*.

"There are nine on deck," he said, "but I can only see their heads just lifted over the side peering at us."

"I reckon they are skeered," said Wickram complacently.

"It may be," said Narragua, but he seemed doubtful.

The men of the *Rattlesnake* were getting the twelve pounders, which had been raised from the lower deck, into position. The ports were also open, and ammunition in cases already in place, ready for use.

Jorkins sauntered away aft and looked over the stern, where a small boat was trailing. He covertly hauled it in, so as to be close under, where it was almost on end, and tossed up and down like a cork on the foaming water. Wickram and the Portuguese remained farther forward, watching the *Daphne*. All eyes were turned towards her.

No one looked astern. Two miles to the rear the steamer of eccentric movements was bearing down upon the *Rattlesnake*.

"We might give her a blank cartridge as a signal to heave to," said Wickram.

"Why waste powder in that foolery?" asked

Narragua; "we shall soon be within range, and then we can give her a taste of our metal."

The *Daphne* suddenly put her helm up and veered to the east, with the wind almost abaft of her. This was a movement that Wickram considered was equivalent to suicide, as it brought the yacht within easy distance of the *Rattlesnake*, which was on a course east of the original one of the pleasure vessel.

Narragua had only to have the *Rattlesnake* steer south-east to overhaul her in a very short time.

The vessels closed in upon each other until there were barely two cable-lengths between them. The men on the deck of the *Daphne* were lying low, hidden by her side. There was a stout man, with his face muffled in a handkerchief, at the wheel.

"What can they be up to?" exclaimed Wickram. "Santioff is a cunning fellow. He has some trick in his head."

"He may design to bring about a collision," said Narragua dryly; "now is the time to give him the first shot."

The men were by the guns. On a signal from Narragua one was promptly loaded on the larboard side. It was an old-fashioned gun, requiring a match to be applied to the touch-hole. One of the men took aim with a light and careless hand. So close in was the yacht that he could not fail to hit her.

"Give it to her boys!" cried Narragua fiercely.

The match was struck and applied to the touch-hole.

The gun was dumb!

"What is the matter with it?" yelled Narragua, dashing up; "where are your eyes? There is some dirt in the touch-hole."

One of the men produced a tool like a small bradawl. He endeavoured to thrust it into the touch-hole, but it went no further than the surface.

"She's been spiked, sir," he said.

Narragua verified this statement, and threw his arms up in a fury as he sprang to the next gun. It was spiked too.

Like a madman he ran round the vessel, testing each in turn. His twelve pounders, which he had relied upon as instruments of terror and destruction, were useless.

Wickram, who followed his movements with a blank expression of face, asked why the guns were not seen to before? Were they ever right? he wanted to know.

"I saw to them yesterday," screamed the Portuguese; "with these eyes of mine I looked to them. They were right then. We have a traitor on board. Ah, your Jorkins! Where is he?"

They looked about the deck for the man. He was not there. One of the men cried out that there was a man in a boat rowing away astern. Wickram picked up a rifle from the deck and ran to the stern.

There was a boat astern, and Jorkins was in it, calmly and steadily pulling away.

The change of course brought the advancing steamer on the starboard side. It was a marvel she was not seen, but those who only had eyes for the spiked guns stared at the useless things, the others were gazing at Jorkins.

"Wear ship and follow him," shouted Wickram.

"And lose the yacht," cried Narragua; "shoot him, the traitor!"

Jorkins showed no haste. His eyes were on Wickram, who raised the rifle to his shoulder and took careful aim. Jorkins did not flinch.

A puff of smoke, a sharp crack, and the boat was to all appearance empty. Jorkins lay at the bottom with a bullet in his chest.

"That for him," said Wickram; "now for the *Daphne*."

The two cable-lengths had become one. In a few minutes the pursuer and pursued would collide and be alongside of each other. On the yacht there was only the man at the helm to be seen.

"Bring him down!" cried Narragua.

Then, as if by magic, the deck of the *Daphne* was alive with armed men. A well-directed fire of rifles decimated the exposed crew of the *Rattlesnake*. Narragua was wounded, and fell upon the deck with a scream of pain and rage.

Wickram, half bewildered and wholly astounded,

saw that the men on the *Daphne* were mainly British tars. There was a mixture of yachtsmen, but they were not the crew of Santioff. The helmsman of the *Rattlesnake* was shot, and the pirate craft veered round to the wind. The *Daphne's* men poured in another destructive fire, and then the yacht bore away to the south-east, and was speedily out of ordinary gun and pistol range.

"Sold—dished!" said Wickram. "Narragua, are you hurt?"

"Should I be lying here if I were not?" demanded the Portuguese. "Look to the helm. The man's down. After that yacht. Don't let her escape. Run her down, go to the bottom of the sea with her—anything rather than let her get away."

Wickram turned to give the necessary order, and saw a new peril, which he might have observed before. It was the steamer that had come within a furlong of the *Rattlesnake* and had brought to.

"A British cruiser," gasped Wickram; "we are lost!"

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE LAST OF THE "RATTLESNAKE."

IN the hour of intense excitement it often happens that our faculties are abnormally active. It was so in this instance with Towner Wickram. He saw, if he did not realize exactly, how Jorkins had planned for the confusion of himself and Narragua, and the destruction of the *Rattlesnake*. The precise motive of the man he could not understand, nor had he the time to dwell upon it. That Jorkins was in league with the yacht and the cruiser was plain. A cutter had been lowered from the former and was being pulled towards the boat in which he was lying.

A blank gun was fired from the cruiser as the signal for the *Rattlesnake* to haul down her flag. Wickram was for doing it. Narragua fiercely vowed he would never yield.

He sat up, holding his hand to his side, and turned his wan, thin face about, as he made what was to be his last appeal to his men.

"Give yourselves up!" he cried; "no. Why should you do so, when it will be but to hang? Do you think these English bull-dogs will show you any mercy? Don't dream or hope for it. You cannot fight, for a traitor has spiked my guns, but you can run. It is your only chance."

The men cried out that the *Rattlesnake* had no hope of escaping from the big, powerful cruiser. Narragua spat upon the deck in contemptuous fury. For himself he knew there was no hope, and it galled him to think that the rest might escape, or at least have their lives spared.

"You can die but once," he said; "bring her round to the wind. I'll shoot the man who offers to haul down the flag of the *Rattlesnake*."

So great was the power he had over his men, that no one dared disobey him, though he lay there like a wounded rat. Towner Wickram hesitated also, when the *Rattlesnake* was put before the wind, to touch the running cord of the flag, though he longed to do it. But he ventured to expostulate with the implacable Narragua.

"It's folly and madness," he said; "we must give ourselves up."

A shot from the *Firefly* flew alongside the *Rattlesnake*. This was the second signal to strike. Narragua, with an effort that must have caused him terrible agony, got upon his feet, pulled off his hat, and waved it defiantly.

"Is there no reason in you?" asked Wickram; "life's precious to some of us."

"I will not of myself yield," replied Narragua; "but I am sick, and will give up the command to you."

"That's sense," rejoined Wickram. "Down with the flag there, furl the canvas, bring her round for laying to."

"Good orders—for a landsman," said Narragua, sarcastically; "if you dare not fight, you know how to yield."

"And you know how to shoulder the onus of it on another," said Wickram, roughly; "you are as willing as I am to do your best to save your rascally life."

"You think so?" said the Portuguese, smoothly. "It would be rude to contradict you, and foolish, for I am wounded. Who will help me below?"

"I'll do that," said Wickram; "forgive me for speaking as I did just now. I ought not to have done it."

The Portuguese captain accepted his arm and walked slowly and painfully to the companion. There he paused to look at the cruiser. Her longboat was manned, to take possession of the *Rattlesnake*.

"In a quarter of an hour they will be here," said Narragua.

"There or thereabouts," answered Towner Wickram.

He helped his wounded companion down the stairs, step by step. Not a groan escaped the Portuguese, but the beads of perspiration stood thickly on his forehead, witnessing to the agony he suffered. At the bottom he sat down.

"I can go no further as yet," he said; "you may leave me. It is only right you should be on deck to receive your friends."

"My friends?"

"Ay! How do I know that you too have not conspired against me? I doubted Jorkins, not knowing the man. You knew him, and professed to have faith in him. Traitors both."

"Narragua, you talk wildly. It is hard to lose everything we sought. It is harder to have to bear your gibes in the hour of my downfall."

"You have earned all I can give you, and more. Go! I despise you. You are both traitor and coward."

Wickram was stung to his heart's core. To lose the faith of Narragua in his honesty was to be deprived of the last shred of his possessions. The accusation was unjust, and he who is habitually unjust to others feels an unfounded charge most keenly.

"Five minutes are gone," said Narragua, looking at his watch; "above all, do not forget the little manners you have. Receive the bloodhounds you brought upon my track with the courtesy they will expect from you."

Wickram turned away and bounded up the companion-way to the deck. Narragua rose up, and, holding by the wall, crept slowly and painfully along the passage to a door at the far end.

It was open, and beyond it was a ladder. Step by step he descended to the hold, where a lantern was burning.

He was almost exhausted now, but he contrived to detach the lantern from the hook in the ceiling, and to carry it across the hold to another door, bound with iron. Beyond it was the magazine of the *Rattlesnake*.

Narragua sat down, and by the light of the lantern again looked at his watch. Twelve minutes had elapsed since he left the deck.

"I will give them twenty," he muttered, "then it will be the time to act."

He kept the watch in his hand, and as he saw the minutes go slowly by his face became more drawn and pinched than ever. A terrible strain was on him, but he was resolved not to forego the desperate plan of action he had conceived.

Eighteen—nineteen—twenty minutes—all gone. He gave them and himself another minute, then he opened the magazine door and went in.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE DEED OF A DESPERATE MAN.

WICKRAM, with a weight of bitterness of heart lying heavily on him, crept back to the deck, where the pirate crew were gloomily awaiting the arrival of the men from the *Firefly*. In a rough and ready way they had furled the sails, and the *Rattlesnake* was lying to. The longboat was coming leisurely along to take possession of the pirate.

Away to the west the cutter was lying alongside the boat in which Jorkins had attempted to get away. Some of the men had left their seats in the cutter and were in the *Rattlesnake's* boat, carefully raising the wounded man. By their movements Wickram could tell he was not dead.

"It will be harder than all to know he will live," muttered the Yankee; "yet it may save me from the hangman. That will be something."

The men in the longboat stopped rowing. An officer seated in the stern watched the movements of the men in the cutter. They seemed to be in doubt what to do with the wounded Jorkins.

This halting of the longboat saved many valuable lives. The five minutes given up to humane curiosity prevented the men and their officer sharing the doom of the *Rattlesnake*.

Wickram, unconscious of the peril he was in, stood moodily on the after-deck awaiting the end. The longboat resumed her way, and at an easy pace drew near.

"They take things coolly," muttered Wickram; "I wish they would come along more smartly. It is against the grain to have to face honest men, but I must do it. Narragua says I ought to receive them as friends. We will receive them together below."

He turned about and hurried down the companion-way.

Opening the door of the chief cabin he looked in. Narragua was not there. He was at that moment consulting his watch for the last time.

"Where is he? What is the madman doing?" Wickram muttered.

He turned back and looked down the passage. The door at the far end was still open. He ran towards it and saw the glimmering of the light below.

"Narragua!" he cried.

"Who calls?" demanded the Portuguese.

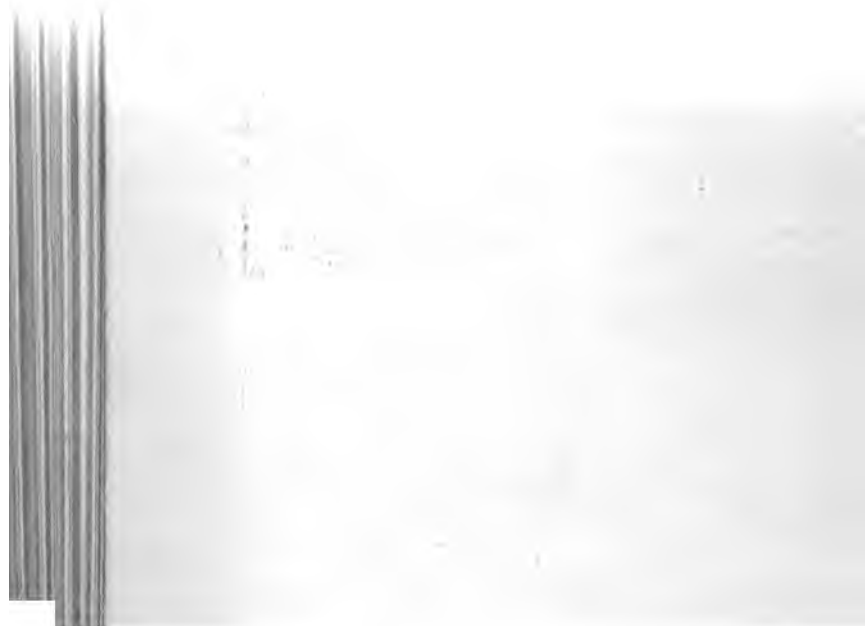
"What are you doing?"

"Come and sec."

Wickram suspected the nature of his work. Futile thoughts of flying passed through his brain. There



"The deed of a desperate man."



was no hope in flight. A horror unspeakable took possession of him. He stepped forward to descend the ladder, missed the top round, and fell.

The fall stunned him for a moment, but rallying, he got upon his feet. The door of the magazine was open, and Narragua was with apparent coolness, certainly with deliberation, pouring out the contents of a gunpowder barrel upon the floor.

"Stop!" shrieked Wickram.

So wild and piercing was his cry of terror that it was heard on deck, and faintly by the men in the longboat, now drawing near to the *Rattlesnake*. Narragua laughed, as maniacs and fiends do in their most evil moods, and deliberately dropped the burning candle he drew from the lantern into the powder.

In prompt response to this desperate act, there was a rending of timbers, a whirling aloft of shattered rigging, of all things appertaining to the *Rattlesnake*, and the blackened bodies of men bereft in a moment of their lives. Of Narragua and Wickram no fragment was ever seen. Rent to pieces, and thrown far and wide about the sea, they vanished for ever from human ken. Adrian and all the men perished.

The longboat was within a hundred yards of the *Rattlesnake* when the magazine was fired by the desperate Portuguese. She was blown round in the sea as on a pivot, and nearly capsized. There was a rain of shattered woodwork upon her a few moments later. The body of one of the pirates fell across the bows,

but a rag of a man from the terrible injuries he had received, then slipped away into the water and was lost. Some blows were received by the sailors from the fragments of the wreck, but in the shock of the moment no thought was given to them.

"Back water," shouted the officer in charge, himself among the wounded, his face torn by a splinter, "back water larboard, pull starboard. Look out for any one alive."

But there were none to be saved. Of all on board the *Rattlesnake* not one lived to receive mercy or punishment, according to his deserts. The sea was strewn with wreckage; a portion of the *Rattlesnake*, comprising her forehold, still floated, burning and sputtering. But these records of the mad deed of Narragua were not worth picking up or looking to, and after rowing round the scene of the explosion for a while, the men returned to the *Firefly*.

Jorkins had been brought thither, and placed in a small deck cabin in the fore part of the cruiser. The doctor was in attendance upon him, and standing by, watching the operation of probing for the bullet, was Bertie. Jorkins lay quietly, outwardly indifferent to the pain arising from the careful labour of the doctor.

"It's no use, sir," he said; "you won't find it. It's gone too deep. I've come to the finish of a very rough journey."

"Don't be certain of that, my good fellow," said the

doctor, soothingly ; " but, anyway, I'll give you a rest for a time."

" And I'll be his nurse, if I may," said Bertie.

" I want no better—the little time I shall be here," said Jorkins.

" As you wish," said the doctor. " I will get you something to drink that will give you sleep."

" I shall sleep without it," said Jorkins, with a wan, soft smile ; " but I thank you for your kindness all the same."

The doctor left to look to the men who had received minor injuries from the fall of the débris of the *Rattlesnake*. Bertie sat down by the side of Jorkins, and took his hand.

" I am so sorry," he said.

" Don't be grieved for me," replied Jorkins ; " it's all for the best. But how in the name of the wonderful things did you come here ?"

" You knew we were at the hacienda of Pavo Floretta ?" Bertie suggested.

" Yes. It was so arranged. You were all to be out of the way. But that tale is mine. Go on."

" My sister got somehow uneasy about the *Daphne*. She told me to ride over in the morning to look at her. I found her gone. As I stood there, wondering what had become of her, Lieutenant Frost, who was left in command of the *Firefly*, came down to the beach. He had been ashore early, to leave a message at the governor's house. He looked at me, and asked

if I belonged to the *Daphne*. I said I did. Then he told me an arrangement had been made for her to leave her moorings and go out to sea, to decoy a pirate to attack her. I asked if I might come, and he hesitated a bit, but allowed me to do so. I sent a message home, and went on board the *Firefly*. I was on deck all the time, and saw everything."

Jorkins patted Bertie's hand and smiled.

"I know all about it," he said. "I went to Captain Lawrence, over at the hacienda of Floretta, and told him all about the *Rattlesnake*. I described her to him, and he said he had heard of her under another name. There were charges against her, but difficult of proof, and he should like to catch her red-handed. So we put our heads together and devised a scheme, that which has been carried out. I had to take Gruff into my confidence."

"Why not my brother or Mr. Brooking?" inquired Bertie.

"Well, Captain Lawrence said it would be a shame to drag them into it; they had enough trouble as it was. More than that, he believed the business could be carried through better without them. There was Miss Lyster, too, to be considered. He guaranteed the safety of the *Daphne*. His own vessel would look after that."

"And it was to get us out of the way he brought his friend Don Pavo Floretta to the *Daphne*?"

"Not entirely. The Don would have come in any

case, but not so soon, perhaps. He was hurried up, and that helped matters. Everything was done for the best."

"Am I talking to you too much?" asked Bertie.

"I feel like talking," replied Jorkins, "sort of strung up, like a runner making for the goal."

"You must not talk in that way. In a few days you will be well."

"No, my dear boy. I've run my course and am drawing to the finish. The doctor guesses it, though he says he hopes for better things. I know it. A man doesn't make mistakes in such matters. And it will be better for me to go. What is there in my poor life that I should wish to keep it?"

The tears dimmed Bertie's eyes. Jorkins saw them, and pressed his hand. But his grasp was feebler than it had been a few minutes before.

"You are young," he said, after a pause; "your future should be a bright and happy one. Don't do what I did when a little older than you are—take up with bad company. I mixed myself up with those who led me to drink, gambling, and to crooked ways. I've got the life of a man on my head. For years I've been in danger of being arrested and tried for murder. But I didn't kill him in cold blood. He was my partner in a prospecting expedition. We were fairly successful, and went back to San Francisco to spend our money."

He stopped for breath, and a glaze formed over his

eyes. Bertie, alarmed, rose to call the doctor. But Jorkins rallied, and told him to sit down again.

"It's no use," he said; "all his medicine couldn't stop my going out. The tide is setting for me towards eternity. What was I saying? Oh, my partner and I went to San Francisco, and we had a riotous time together. It was mad and foolish. We kept our money in a bag, and used to take out so much apiece every morning, all fair and square. One night, when he thought I was asleep, he got up and helped himself. I was awake, and jumped out of bed to stop him. The drink was still in us, and we struggled together, each angry with the other. He got at one of his revolvers, and it was while I tried to wrest it from him that it went off. He was shot through the head."

"How awful!" exclaimed Bertie.

"More awful than you can conceive," said the dying man. "I left him lying there and fled away into the open country. From that time I've been haunted. I could find no good people to associate with me anywhere. I was warned away from the homes of the settlers. More than that, too, I've been told point-blank that I looked as if I'd committed a murder. So I fell back again into the wrong company, and that's how I got mixed up with Wickram and his crew."

"When you were young," said Bertie, "had you friends to care for you?"

"None better—simple folk, but square—honest. Kind and thoughtful to everybody, more than kind to me. But I went wrong, and the end's come. I've tried to do something good by way of a finish. It isn't much, and I make no boast of it. There is something more I promised to you."

"You mean the hiding-place of the gold," said Bertie, distressed beyond measure; "never mind that. It was a boyish fancy of mine."

"It belongs to you and your friends," said Jorkins, drawing his breath with visible labour, "as much as to any one in the world."

"But I shall never find it."

"You will. Stoop down and let me whisper in your ear. I won't run the risk of any one over-hearing me."

Bertie stooped down. The eyes of the sinking man were again glazed for a moment, but a brightness flickered in them once more as he whispered a few words in the boy's ear.

Bertie was startled, his face flushed, and his eyes sparkled. But he reproached himself the next moment for feeling a selfish pleasure in that sad hour. Jorkins was near his end, unless—vain hope—he was mistaken. It was a strange liking that existed between these two, so strongly contrasted in mind and body, in everything.

"You *must* live," urged Bertie; "at home we can find a place for you where you can be quiet and happy."

"Not a word to any one," said Jorkins, feebly, "until—you—get—home. Will you kiss me on the cheek, dear boy?"

Bertie touched his cheek with his lips, and found it was almost as cold as ice. The eyes of the poor fellow were again getting filmy.

"Bertie—is this—your hand?" murmured the dying Jorkins. "I—can't tell—fetch the—doctor—now. I want—a few moments—alone."

Bertie sped away out of the cabin and sought the doctor, who was below bandaging the arm of a sailor.

"He is going!" cried the boy; "come and see what you can do for him. Oh, save his life if you can. He is a rough man, but there is a deal of good in him."

The doctor made no answer, but asked the sailor to hold the bandage while he was gone. Then he and Bertie hastened to the deck cabin.

Jorkins was lying very still, with half-closed eyes. A glance sufficed for the doctor.

"It is all over with him, poor fellow," he said. "I had little hope of him, but the end has come sooner than I expected."

CHAPTER XLV.

THE RETURN TO BUENOS AYRES.

THE *Firefly* and the *Daphne* returned in company, the former under easy steam, the latter carrying all sail. The day was drawing to a close, and the sun, red as a globe of vermillion, rested on the horizon of the plain, but there was light enough for expectant eyes ashore to distinguish the vessels as they brought to and dropped anchor.

Gathered together were four men keenly interested in the return—Lyon, Ralph, Captain Lawrence, and Don Pavo Floretta.

"The expedition has been a success," said the captain of the *Firefly*, as a flag flew up in a ball to the masthead, and with its folds loosened, opened out and fluttered in the breeze.

"Boats from both vessels are coming ashore," said the Don.

It was so. One brought Bertie from the *Firefly*, the other Gruff from the *Daphne*. The latter saluted his captain rather sheepishly.

"I've done wrong, sir, I know," he said; "but I did the wrong so as to bring things right. It's been a very serious business, sir, but no great harm has come to any one but them as earned it, with the exception of poor Jorkins."

"He is dead," said Bertie, "and has already been buried at sea. I am awfully sorry. We were such friends. We owe him more than you think of, Lyon."

"I know of something I am indebted to him for," replied Lyon. "It is time we were getting back. Gruff, you will have no further need to act without commands from me."

"No, sir. You ain't angry, I hope. Jorkins put the thing so clearly to me, that I felt I must join in with the conspiracy."

"You need not trouble further about it. Your prisoner is safe, I hope?"

"Yes, sir. He's been powerfully excited, they tell me, hoping he was going to be rescued. Now he knows things have gone wrong, he's quite in a collapsible condition."

"He will be fetched away in the morning."

"Eh, sir?"

"He is wanted here for certain misdeeds of his done some years ago. It seems, also, that I am keeping him unlawfully."

"The *Daphne* will be well rid of him, sir," said Gruff, as he saluted and stepped into the boat.

It was dark now, but on the open plain the Don assured them they could ride as safely as in the open day. Their horses were soon obtained from the public stable where they had been placed, and after a gentle canter through the town, they urged the animals into a gallop, and were speedily back at the hacienda.

Bertie had a tale to tell, but he refused to say a word until later on in the evening.

"The loss of poor Jorkins upset me," he said, as he sat down to dinner. "I have had nothing on the *Firefly*. It seems almost too bad to eat now."

"We have to eat to live," said Captain Lawrence; "grief, in the young especially, is evanescent."

"I shall never forget poor Jorkins," said Bertie; "he was very near his end when I left him. His face was changed; he seemed to be a different man."

The story of the disastrous end of the *Rattlesnake* found eager listeners in the garden when dinner was over. But one thing Bertie would not reveal, and that was the secret of the hiding-place of the gold of Sutter the Swiss.

"I promised Jorkins not to say anything," he said, "until we got home."

"That deprives us of the opportunity of turning back to find it," said Ralph, facetiously.

"You are welcome to your little joke," said Bertie, "but wild horses couldn't draw it out of me. I keep the secret—perhaps for good."

"Until you are a man," said Lyon, "and can

organize a search-party of your own to go and find it, and have all sorts of greedy vices develop among you, leading to the survival only of the fittest—or the strongest.”

“Chaff away,” said Bertie, “if it amuses you. I can get possession of the gold whenever I feel inclined to look for it.”

The conversation turned to Santioff’s imprisonment. The mention of his name, while they were waiting for the return of the *Daphne*, led to some interesting revelations from the Don. He recognized in the one-time mate of the yacht a man who had years before resided in Buenos Ayres. A long course of swindling transactions, coupled in the end with a murder (it was called a duel) of an inoffensive banker, led to Santioff’s hurried flight from the country.

Nothing had been heard of him until his name was mentioned by Lyon. The Don expressed a wish for him to be handed over to the Argentine authorities, but hoped it would be as a matter of courtesy and not of legal pressure. Lyon and Ralph were only too glad to dispose of their prisoner in this way, for assuredly they were getting rather tired of his company, and much trouble and legal expense at home would be avoided.

An order for his transmission to the local authorities had already been issued, and it was not the intention of any of the hacienda party to be present at the time he was taken from the *Daphne*.

"I cannot part with you for a week at least," said the señora.

Ralph was inclined to demur, as he was eager to be on his way home; but Carrie quietly assured him that it would be much in harmony with Lyon's wishes if he accepted the invitation. The reason for Lyon's willingness to remain was apparent. It originated entirely in Lucelle.

But it was not to be a perfect week, nor even another entirely peaceful day. In the evening there came riding in from the town a mounted officer with troublous news of Santioff.

"The fiend has escaped," he said; "surely there never was so daring a thing."

Then he told them of Santioff and the police, six in number, who took charge of him. To avoid attracting public attention they had removed his shackles. The worn look of the man and his obvious weakness led them to believe he would give them no trouble.

But weak men under certain circumstances are sometimes briefly endowed with strength that enables them to accomplish an amazing thing. Santioff, as he was being led through the streets, broke through his escort, sprang upon a strange man who was riding in their company, walking his horse as he gazed at the prisoner, knocked him off the saddle, and sprang into his seat.

Graphically the narrator told of the reckless ride

of Santioff through the town. How he was pursued by men on horseback and on foot; how some tried to bar his way, only to be obliged to spring aside at the last moment, or suffer the penalty of being ridden down, as two or three of the boldest were.

"Nothing stopped him," said the officer; "shots were fired at him in vain. As one with a charmed life, he escaped everything, and dashed into the open country, where he was lost."

The fact that Santioff had no arms at the time of his escape was but a poorly comforting piece of news. He would have no difficulty in obtaining them from the lawless people scattered about, ever willing to aid an escaped convict, and to receive him into their company.

"It is a most unfortunate thing," said Don Pavo Floretta; "the man is dangerous."

There was no doubt of that. He was an old offender, one of those reckless adventurers found in the outlying districts of all imperfectly civilized or loosely governed countries. And again, would he not bear in mind his recent captivity, and seek revenge?

The police would do all that lay in their power, but that was not much. The town needed them, and the outlying districts were too vast to be more than perfunctorily patrolled. At the haciendas, the proprietors with their numerous servants could look after themselves. Strangers ran a risk at all times in going about alone.

CHAPTER XLVI.

A CONSULTATION.

THE officer having been refreshed, and his horse fed, returned to the town. In the Don's private room the men gathered together, and the women were in an adjoining apartment, the señora's boudoir, with Bertie as the sole representative of the sterner sex. He rather resented being shut out from the men, as he believed, with the cool confidence of his years, that his advice and help would be invaluable.

There were no signs of trepidation among the fair women, though the escape of Santioff was pregnant with possible evil. The señora spoke of him as "that terrible man," and wondered how he could ever have found favour in the eyes of Ralph Brooking.

"Neither Lyon nor myself ever liked him," said Carrie; "he was, when in charge of the yacht at home, too smooth-tongued, and there was a suppressed way in his manner of speaking to you, coupled with his never looking squarely into your face, that was very

objectionable to us. I always thought he was a man who held himself in, as it were, restraining his passions, and there was ever an air of his acting a part about him, that made us think he was not trustworthy."

Lyon, in the adjoining room, said something to the same effect, but in a less pronounced way, as it was a sore point with Ralph, who could but admit he had been blind.

"I was wrong all through, and it has given us no end of trouble," he said, "and you have lost the *Iris*—"

"Which can be replaced," interposed Lyon. "But don't let us waste time in discussing our mistakes, past troubles, and losses. Let us rather arrange what is to be done now."

"Nothing can be done," said Don Pavo Floretta, "until we learn the whereabouts of the rascal. We shall soon hear of him. He is restless, eager to give you something in return, you may be sure. But it occurs to me that you needn't wait."

They looked at him inquiringly. The Don smoked placidly for a few moments, and then gave the explanation they evidently asked for with their eyes.

"I should be sorry to lose such agreeable guests," he said, "but you have a yacht, and it can put to sea. Santioff may be powerful for mischief on land, but he cannot follow you to sea."

"You suggest we should fly from him and leave you to bear the brunt of our affairs," said Ralph.

"I have nothing to fear from him," said the Don ; but Lyon would not have it so.

"We can and ought to cease to be your guests," he said ; "but we shall not leave Buenos Ayres until Santioff is recaptured."

"You must remain here then. Believe me, the hacienda is safe from open attack. The offscourings of our population that infest the country never attempt to prey upon people of position. They go for the middle classes or the comparatively poor and strangers—the latter for choice."

He would not hear of their leaving his hospitable roof, for the present anyway. And as he said, they could do nothing but wait for tidings of the whereabouts of Santioff.

Unknown to his guests he sent out some of his servants on horseback to ride round the hacienda as night patrols. This was done after the conference, and while Lucelle was singing to her charmed circle of friends. Tacitly it was understood that there was to be no sitting in the grounds that night, and the jealousies of the windows were closed.

"Rifles carry a long way in these days," was the thought of Lyon, as he passed his hand over one of them and found it was made of iron, "and this is a wise precaution. It looks as if an attack at an earlier period had been made upon the house."

He asked the Don the next day if it were not so.

"Yes," was the quiet answer; "we have occasionally had trouble, but not with the outlaws. The vendetta is not unknown here. Two men quarrel—one is shot. It is bad; but it does not end there. The friends of the dead man take up the matter, and there is shooting to and fro until many lives are lost. It goes on to the extermination of one side, if nothing intervenes."

"And you have been mixed up in a vendetta?" exclaimed Ralph.

"I had four brothers," answered Don Floretta, "and I alone am alive. There were some cousins, too, who have vanished."

"And the other side?" queried Captain Lawrence.

"All gone," said Don Pavo. "Cruel work—bitter work; but I was not to blame. I did not begin the quarrel, but it was my unhappy lot to end it. We must defend ourselves. If I had endeavoured to make peace, they would have called me a coward, and shot me all the same. You Englishmen enjoy liberty without having to endure the licence of ruffianism."

"There is no place like home," said Lyon.

"Then why not go there? Depart in the morning."

"And be branded a coward. Don't forget that if Santioff is imbued with the spirit of revenge he could follow me. One cannot enjoy life with the knowledge that assassination is impending. No. We must see him safe in prison."

"Once there," said the Don, with a grim smile, "he will have old outside friends who will see to his being kept there."

They sat up late that night. Two or three times the Don went out to speak to one of his men, who had come in from the men patrolling to report.

"All quiet," were the tidings throughout the evening.

Lyon and Ralph slept in adjoining rooms. There was a communicating door, which the latter threw open as he was undressing.

"I wonder," he said, "if Santioff is really the terrible fellow they make him out to be?"

"We shall soon hear something of him," replied Lyon. "What is the time?"

"Nearly one o'clock."

As they were about parting company a faint sound from the outside reached their ears. They looked at each other. Though coming from afar it was unmistakable.

"A rifle," said Lyon.

"There's another, and another," exclaimed Ralph. "Turn down the lamp—put it out, and then we can open the window."

They turned out the lamp in both rooms, and opened one of the French windows that gave them egress to the veranda. The bedrooms of the hacienda were in the front of the building, on the side nearest the stables.

There was the soft light of a moon in its third

quarter upon the landscape, but, owing to the shrubberies in the garden, they could not see very far. A slight sound to the right startled them. Turning they saw Don Pavo Floretta.

"Then you heard them?" he said. "There has been trouble of some sort out yonder."

"It is not all over," said Lyon, as the report of rifles again reached them. It sounded nearer, but the Don said he believed it was further off.

"We are outside now," he pointed out, "and that makes it more clearly heard. What say you? Shall we ride out and see what the trouble is?"

"Gladly," said Lyon.

"Close your window—it goes with a spring," said the Don, "and follow me. I know the hang of everything in the stables, and will get the horses ready."

The stables were on the south side of the hacienda. All the doors were locked, but the Don had a master-key.

"Wait till I get a light," said Don Pavo. "Horses don't like strangers in the stable, and in the dark they invariably lash out. It is not easy to dodge the heels of the beasts unless you see them coming."

He struck a match and lighted a lantern hanging to a nail on the wall. Ranged in a long line were the stalls, some of them empty, others occupied by horses lying down or on their feet, looking round inquiringly at the early visitors to the stable.

The saddles and bridles were hung along the wall.

Don Pavo took down a saddle and slipped into a stall, speaking soothingly to the horse.

Ralph and Lyon performed a similar office for themselves. Last of all the Don took down from a rack three rifles belonging to the men and a cartridge belt apiece well filled.

"We are always ready here—for anything," he said.

They led their horses out just in time to hear another burst of rifle-firing. Now it was undoubtedly nearer.

"My men are being pressed," said the Don, as he climbed nimbly into the saddle. "Never mind the stable door. We may be much wanted out there."

Ralph and Lyon sprang into the saddle and rode away at a gallop. As they melted away into shadowy forms Bertie came out from the gloom of the veranda and slipped into the stable.

"Beastly mean of them not to call me," he muttered. "But luckily I was awake and could hear things as well as other people. I'll soon be on your track, my dear boys."

He had some trouble in saddling the horse he selected, as the animal showed strong objections to the process, but, persevering, he got both the saddle and bridle in their places, and arming himself as his brother and the other two had done, with his blood running swiftly through his veins, he gave his horse the rein and dashed after them.

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE TIGERS OF THE PLAIN.

AS the three men rode on they kept silent, and the only sounds heard for a while were the thud of the feet and the snorting of the horses. Hostilities in the distance were at an end, or temporarily suspended.

A mile or so from the hacienda a horse was heard galloping towards them. They reined up and unslung their rifles, ready loaded.

"It is one of my men," said the Don, as a figure was revealed by the moonlight. "Juan, if I am not mistaken."

The man saw them, and swerved his horse aside. But a word from his master brought him nearer to them.

"What is it, Juan?" said Don Pavo Floretta.

"Some of the Tigers, señor, have shown themselves," replied Juan. "We closed in and emptied several of their saddles."

"Any one hurt on our side?"

"Pascal has a bullet in his arm, but he will not return home."

"Why then are you in such a hurry to retreat?"

"Señor, the Tigers suddenly drew off, and we thought they had departed. But it came to me that they may be making a detour to attack the hacienda, as they were bearing towards it when we checked them."

"It was wise of you, Juan. We will return, and you had better call in the men."

While the Don was talking with Juan, Bertie drew near. Espying them in conference he bore away to the left, and rode on until he believed he was out of danger of being seen. Then he stopped his horse and waited, listening. The sound of horses galloping was heard for a few moments and then suddenly ceased. He was too far away to hear the voices of the men, who spoke softly. After a short delay, the dumb pattering of hoofs on the soft soil again reached his ears.

Unaware of the arrangement made for returning to the house, Bertie decided to go on, but to ride wide of the route he believed his friends were taking. He felt very much excited by the loneliness, the weird light of the waning moon adding to its impressiveness, and the undoubted peril he was in, if he found himself alone in the region of an enemy.

Bertie could only guess who they were. Indefinitely he had an idea of men with whom Santioff had

succeeded immediately after his escape in associating himself. The boy believed that these men would get the worst of an encounter with his friends, and he wanted to have something to do with, or at the least witness, the victory.

The faith of the young in their elders whom they love is a beautiful thing. It inspired Bertie with a nerve that was beyond his years. No thought of their being overcome by a cruel enemy entered his head, and sitting at his ease in the saddle he rode on, casting quick glances around, seeing nothing but the imperfectly defined flat country about him.

Eventually it occurred to him that he might be riding too far, and he again reined up his horse. Nowhere could he see aught that was human, or hear anything to indicate the nearness of friend or foe.

"I've got out of their track," he thought, as his horse, impatiently pawing the sandy ground, wheeled about this way and that. The stillness was broken by the sharp crack of a rifle at a distance. It was followed by another and another, then a continuous firing, with faint sounds of shouting.

"Why, I've got *miles* ahead of them," exclaimed Bertie in disgust.

He set the head of his horse towards the sounds he heard and rode on for a few minutes at a hand-gallop. Then there appeared out of the gloom, riding rapidly towards him, five or six men. It needed

no second glance to reveal to him that they were strangers.

They wore broad panama hats, that flapped up and down with every stride of their horses, and each had a rifle in one hand, which he waved about as he urged his animal on. Bertie felt his blood suddenly chill. The warmth of excitement vanished, and for a moment he felt as if his last hour had come.

But voyaging had nerved him, and he was naturally resolute. Life was very dear to him, and to fight such a formidable foe would be madness, so he turned his horse round and urged it into a hand-gallop.

The men espied him, and a hoarse shout broke from the lips of one who seemed to be their leader. He bestrode a white horse, a rare thing in that country where the dun-coloured mustang predominates, with a moderate proportion of brown and black quadrupeds captured from the wild herds of the plains.

To get beyond the reach of enemies was the first thought of the boy. Little as he really knew of horses, he was conscious of bestriding a good one. It was more than possible that the men were equally well mounted, and as horsemen they had the undoubted advantage of him. But again he had a point in his favour in the matter of weight. Everybody knows that in a race even a pound makes a difference. Bertie had the advantage of at least three stone, perhaps four; for though he was growing fast, nature as yet

had confined itself to giving him length, leaving breadth and filling out to a future time.

What if his horse stumbled or fell? He thought of the probability, and kept a wary eye upon the ground where the sage-bush grew in scattered form with big clusters of huge thistles between. Instinctively he put a tight hand upon the bridle rein and sat well back so as to avert the consequences of a mishap of the nature above referred to.

The men did not gain ground. Of that he was certain at the outset. Looking back he knew was dangerous, as he was not a perfect horseman, and he kept his eyes in front. The man on the white horse shouted out something to him in words he did not understand, but he judged it was a command for him to stop.

"Not quite so green as that," thought Bertie.

The man put the bridle of his horse between his teeth and raised his rifle to his shoulder. Crack! The bullet went by Bertie, ominously shrieking and whistling in its flight. The boy's very hair bristled, but he merely dug his heels, innocent of spur, into the horse's side, and gave it an encouraging cry.

In response the really noble steed bounded forward with an even, elastic stride. No ordinary seat could be safer than the saddle, provided nothing untoward happened. Bertie stretched his ears, to use an accepted phrase, and the sounds of pounding hoofs in the rear certainly seemed to be growing fainter.

"I shall beat them," he thought, and again he pressed the sides of the horse and shouted, "Hi, there, my beauty! Show them what you can do."

It was literally flying now. Like some swallow just skimming the ground the splendid horse sped on its way straight out into the boundless country. But whither was he going? Bertie thought of that now, and decided on bearing a little to the right, with the object of making a detour so as to work round to the hacienda. The horse with all its strength and endurance could not keep on at the pace much longer.

But the movement was fraught with peril. It brought him nearer to his pursuers. So keen was his hearing under the influence of his excitement, that he promptly detected a slight increase in the beating of the horses' feet behind him. With a feeling of bitterness, the first dawn of despair, he again headed the horse straight and rode on, once more gaining ground, but each moment flying farther from friends and the only place of refuge available to him in that vast and lonely region.

CHAPTER XLVIII

THE FIGHTING AT THE HACIENDA.

THE surmise that the band of lawless men, known as the Tigers, were making for the hacienda proved to be correct. Barely had the Don with his two English friends reached it, when a body of mounted men, numbering a score at least, were seen advancing.

"Stay here a moment," said Don Pavo Floretta, "while I rouse my fellows."

There was no time to give more definite directions, but Lyon and Ralph knew what was expected of them. They backed their horses close to the veranda, where they were in shadow, looked to their rifles, and waited for the Tigers to come within range.

"There is a fellow on a white horse," said Lyon; "he is a fair mark. I think I can hit him."

He took aim and fired. The horsemen were then about four hundred yards away, and Lyon missed the leader; but a man immediately behind him reeled in the saddle and fell to the ground.

There was a reining up, and a tumult of voices ; but the leader, with angry cry, rallied his men, calling them children and cowards, and declaring that one shot meant only one man to deal with.

"On, and sack the hacienda!" he shrieked in a *patois* of the plains of Buenos Ayres—a mixture of Spanish and other tongues, almost worthy of being recognized as a distinct language.

They came on again, and both Ralph and Lyon fired to stop the advance. Another of the Tigers fell, and some of the foremost returned the fire ; but, with only the flash of the young men's rifles to guide them, their aim was far from being true. It was all guess work, but two of the bullets struck the wall of the hacienda unpleasantly near.

The entire household was now alarmed. The sound of women crying to each other in agitated tones was prominent among other indications of haste and fear. The voice of the señora rose above all, crying, "No lights! no lights!"

Her motive in giving this warning was clear. Lights would be a guide to the foe. It was not the first time the hacienda had been attacked, and the señora kept her head where a woman unaccustomed to the semi-wild life of the open country would have lost hers.

"I hope the Don will be smart with his men," said Ralph. "Here come the Tigers!"

Uttering fierce cries, intended to intimidate, the

outlaws came galloping on. Of the result of an encounter with them there could be no doubt. What could two do against so many?

Ralph and Lyon hurriedly dismounted, and let their horses go. The animals quietly walked into the open stable.

"We must defend the women to the last!" muttered Ralph, as he fired again. The Tigers were then within a hundred yards. They could at last see there were but two men under the veranda, and wild cries of triumph burst from their throats.

But their triumph was short-lived. The Don had quickly aroused his men—already half their number had been awakened by the firing—and they came running out of their quarters imperfectly dressed, but armed and full of fight.

"Death to the Tigers!" they shouted in their shrill voices.

A hot fire was poured into the thick of the horse-men, so prominent in the moonlight, and half the saddles were emptied. Several horses fell, and their moanings, unique among the many vocal offsprings of pain, were pitiful.

The remaining Tigers returned the fire wildly, and without aim worthy of the name. Again a hot fusilade of rifles played havoc among them, and the survivors turned and fled.

Through all, the leader remained unscathed. To the last he encouraged his men with shouts that had

a deeper ring than the cries of the rest. It was almost English in its breadth and depth. But when he suddenly found that he was to be left almost alone, he too retreated.

Shot after shot was fired at him, but he was as one who had a charmed life. Unscathed he got away with a few companions, to threaten the life of Bertie, as already described.

A few moments later Juan and the men of the patrol came riding in, without having met the remnant of the defeated band.

"A glorious victory!" cried Ralph, and up went his hat into the air.

"The Tigers are as good as wiped out," said Don Pavo Floretta, "and at a small cost. Juan, look to the wounded rascals. Treat them well, and let all able to move be taken down to the prison. Shoot the wounded horses."

There were a few wounded among the followers of the Don, but the victory was decisive, and gained, as they thought, at a little cost. In the house there were the glad women to receive and praise the heroes of the night; and then it was that Bertie was missed.

"It is strange that the boy should sleep through all this commotion," said Lyon. "I'll fetch him out."

But the room was empty; and then, as he carried back the disturbing news, a servant reported the

Don's favourite horse "Eaglet," to be missing from the stable. There was no further explanation necessary. They understood almost as clearly as if they had been witnesses of Bertie's movements what had become of that exceedingly venturesome youth.

What was to be done? Nothing until the morning, it was feared. As was explained by Don Pavo Floretta, it would require a hundred horsemen to scour the plain at night, and then probably they would find nothing.

The Tigers were decimated. Only a few of their number remained. Some comfort was derived from that. But why was Bertie still away? If, as they truthfully reckoned, he had gone out to see what Lyon and Ralph were bent on doing, and escaped falling into the enemies' hands, why did he not return?

"He is a rash, hotheaded villain of a boy!" said Lyon angrily; "and I wish I had left him at home."

"Nothing will happen to him," said the Don confidently. "When I look at a boy like him, I think of those toys made for children which you can throw about and place in any position, and they always come right in a few moments, head uppermost. He will return. Let us not mourn for him until we see him dead."

"But the Tigers will have no mercy on the young dog if they get hold of him," said Lyon.

"If they spare him," replied the Don, "they will falsify all tradition told of them. I am candid with you ; but have no fear, he will return."

They shared his confidence to some extent. Carrie was more hopeful than Lyon, or pretended to be so. There were no more thoughts of rest, as the night was far spent, and day would soon be there.

"I am the only man among you who has done nothing," thought Captain Lawrence, who, as a matter of fact, decidedly irritating to him, had slept until the whole affair was over ; "and if I can get a horse quietly, I will have a trot round to see what has become of the boy."

The entire stable was at his disposal, as he knew. Unseen he left the room, and strolled into the stables. Before the dawn was breaking he rode away over the plain to find the absent Bertie, concerning whose fate there was growing a decidedly apprehensive feeling in the breast of all his friends.

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE FINDING OF THE LOST ONE.

THE slain horses, which the Don's men had not yet had time to remove, were the sole evidence of the loss of life in the fight that met the eyes of Captain Lawrence as he galloped over the ground ; but in one of the outhouses of the hacienda a full half-score of still forms of men were awaiting interment.

They were men who but the day before had been filled with the breath of life, and now, like lights extinguished, were gone for ever from the world. And they died too with evil passions—the lust of blood and desire to rob and destroy a peaceful home—burning in their veins. It was very sad to think of, and Captain Lawrence was no philosopher to pass it by as one of the inevitable things of life, but a humane, thoughtful man, who could look upon a misspent life suddenly brought to a close with pity and regret.

As babes, they had been nursed by loving mothers ;

as boys, hopes of their future may have gladdened the hearts of their fathers ; as men, they may for a time have shown some promise ; and this was the end—shot like prowling wild beasts ! It was horrible.

It is strange, but true, that the more dangerous ruffians of half-civilized countries are men of good birth, at least of most respectable families, who have gone wrong. Corrupt associations, a spendthrift disposition, indulgence in various forms of vice, set them on the crooked road, of which there is never a good ending. It is patent to all the world. The young are as instinctively conscious of it as their more experienced elders are certain of it ; but there is never a day when hundreds, nay, thousands, do not take the fatal turn that leads from all that life is worth living for to that which makes it repulsive.

If Bertie was killed it would be bad enough, but he, at least, would leave no record of ill-doing of a very serious nature behind him. Captain Lawrence tried to draw some comfort from that. Very little could he find.

Where was the boy ? He strained his eyes and looked across the expanse on which the light of day was slowly spreading and brightening. The sun was not yet above the horizon, and the farthest land was very dark. He looked back at the hacienda—a mere toy in the distance—and saw little black specks moving to and fro in front of it. The scouting-party that had waited for the day was on the move.

It was a strange feeling that induced him to ride forth alone. There was something almost boyish in it. At the root of it was a desire to do something to please Inez. Cervantes killed the chivalry of the men of Spain with his ridicule, but nothing has ever destroyed the love of its women for men who do worthy deeds.

And if he could but find Bertie, and bring him safely home, it would enhance him in the eyes of his affianced wife. Apart from that, he liked the boy, and would have gone a long way out of his road to serve him. But the mainspring of his action lay in the wish to please Inez.

As the light grew stronger the horizon cleared, and two objects, hitherto indiscernible, were revealed. They were simply dots, one black and the other white.

They were moving slowly, and there was a wide gap between them. He judged at first that it must at least have been a mile; but, as he watched, he became convinced that the distance was surely lessening.

He put spurs to his horse, and, taking a line so as to get between the two objects, soon discovered that they were persons on horseback, the foremost going slowly, the other advancing with a quicker movement; but the pace of both was comparatively slow.

Nearer, the captain saw that the foremost rider sat in the saddle leaning forward with bent head, as one exhausted. He who was in the rear rode upright and

firmly. The black of the leader became brown, the supposed man was seen to be a boy, and Captain Lawrence, with exultation very natural under the circumstances, knew he had found Bertie.

Who was the other man? He rode a white horse; so did the leader of the Tigers. The whole thing was clear. But would Captain Lawrence be in time to save Bertie? That was the question he asked himself.

He had more than two miles to travel ere he could intervene himself between pursuer and pursued. The mile, so judged, had been reduced by a third, and the leader of the Tigers was urging on his horse with hand and foot.

But why was Bertie so quiet? He sat in the saddle, but never moved. His legs hung listlessly, and his arms rested against his side. His chin rested on his breast. It was plain he was exhausted, or "pumped out," as the captain muttered to himself. The leader of the Tigers had but to overtake him, to make an easy prey of the boy.

Then, as the captain drew nearer, the man on the white horse espied him. A quick movement of the hand as he struck his horse betrayed it. But he would not turn and fly. With dogged, terrible determination he kept on, bent on killing the boy, though it cost his own life.

With an energy that would have been cruelty under any other circumstances, Captain Lawrence

urged on his horse. It responded nobly to his call. It tore along as if imbued with the spirit of a rescuer, rapidly gaining ground, until there was no more than two hundred yards to be traversed ere the line taken by Bertie and his foe was reached ; and there was more than double the distance still between them. The race was so far won.

But the leader of the Tiger band was armed, and, seeing all hope of overtaking Bertie gone, he brought his rifle to the shoulder and fired. Bertie still sat listlessly in the saddle untouched, his horse just crawling along with its head down, on the verge of utter collapse. What a picture of the end of a long ride for life !

The Tiger leader, seeing he had missed, felt in his belt for another cartridge. His hand rapidly slid to and fro, and his angry gesture showed he had no more. His last cartridge was gone. The discovery made a coward of him, and, pulling his horse round, he endeavoured to fly.

"You first, my friend," muttered Captain Lawrence ; "the boy can wait. He will not get far away, poor lad !"

The white horse was worn out ; not so much so as that which Bertie still bestrode, but it was weak, and no match for the animal dashing towards it. The rider looked back, and seeing his impending capture, made a last desperate effort to escape.

He beat his hapless horse with the barrel and but-

end of his gun, and dug in the cruel spur with the wild ferocity of terror and despair. In response the animal gave a bound forward, stumbled, and threw its rider, who, pitched forward on his head, rolled over, and lay still.

As Captain Lawrence rode up, the horse was at its last gasp. The final, supreme effort it made to obey the will of its rider had broken its heart. The man never stirred.

But he might be foxing. The captain was wary, and approached him revolver in hand ready for use. No need to employ it there. The head lay on one side at an angle that showed the neck of the man was broken.

Leaving him there, Captain Lawrence rode after Bertie, and soon overtook him. He was a picture of utter exhaustion and distress, but still conscious in a dim way of things around him. He put up his arm as if to defend himself; but the feeble action overbalanced him, and he would have fallen, if his rescuer had not caught him in his arms.

"Nothing—matter—with—me," came feebly from his lips.

"There isn't much life left in you," muttered Captain Lawrence, as he fairly lifted the boy into the saddle of his own horse, and slipped to the ground. "I must get you home as soon as I can. If there was only one of the good old English brooks running near, to give you some water, but in this country they are not. Do you know me?"

"Shoot—me," said Bertie, with a terribly feeble effort to be defiant. He failed to recognize his rescuer. Captain Lawrence was in despair.

"So far to go," he thought; and he looked towards the hacienda, but could not see it. There was, however, a sight almost as welcome as a place of shelter. Some horsemen were riding towards him, and foremost he soon recognized Ralph and Lyon. Immediately in their rear was Don Pavo Floretta.

"We sighted you in the distance," said Lyon, as they dashed up, with three of the stablemen behind them. "You have found him—most providentially, as I humbly think. Is he hurt? Not dead, I hope."

"Done up—worn out," said the captain.

"I have a flask of cordial with me," said the Don.

He brought it out from his pocket, and a little was poured into the mouth of Bertie. At first he made no effort to swallow, but as a small portion of it slipped down his throat, he revived sufficiently to dispose of the remainder. He regained his consciousness of things around him, and turned his eyes from one to the other.

"You've come," he said, in a voice scarcely above a whisper; "I thought you would. Long night—awful ride—horse done up."

"He may have some more of the cordial," said the Don; "it won't hurt him."

The second dose still further restored Bertie, who was soon able to ask how he had been ~~saved~~.

"I came up just in time, I think," said Captain Lawrence. "You ought to be got home as soon as possible."

"Where's the poor horse?" asked Bertie. "Don Pavo, will you ever forgive me?"

"The horse will recover, and so will you; and there's an end," was the cheerful answer.

One of the stablemen was requested to slowly lead the animal back, and rest it by the way if necessary. Bertie was given his horse, and, having been assisted into the saddle, declared he could ride home.

"I'll tell you all that's happened, and thank you as I ought," he said, "when I've had a rest. I never had such a night in my life."

They could well believe him. He looked for the time as if he had suddenly leaped into early manhood. He was so weak that he could only ride home at a very gentle pace, with an attendant on each side of him.

"We will soon overtake you," sang out Captain Lawrence. "Lyster, I want you to look at a fellow I found in pursuit of him. The persistence and venom he showed lead me to think that he is no common marauder."

They went over to the spot where the dead man was lying. A simultaneous expression of surprise and horror burst from Lyon and Ralph.

"It is as I suspected, then," said Captain Lawrence.

"It is Santioff," was the answer.

"I remember him," said the Don, as he stooped down and scanned the quiet face, with all the lines indicative of evil passions smoothed out by the hand of death; "a daring fellow always. The Tigers must have known who he was, and accepted him as their leader—in the raid upon my place, at least. No doubt his plan was to promptly attack us, wipe you out, and get away before measures could be taken to arrest him. He lived a life of craft and violence, and he has met a death in harmony with his deeds. Rascal as he is, he shall have fitting burial for a man. I will see that it is done. Now we will follow the boy. What courage he has! I regret that I have not one like him for a son."

CHAPTER L

HOME AGAIN.

DON PAVO FLORETTA kept his English guests for another week ; and most enjoyable it was to all. Before that period of time had expired it was understood that Lyon and Lucelle had become firmly imbued with the conviction that they were born to make each other happy ; and it was arranged that, early in the next spring, when the Don proposed to run over to England, his wife and remaining daughter should accompany him.

The term "remaining daughter" was used in the full belief that, prior to the voyage being undertaken, Inez would be the wife of Captain Lawrence. In passing, we may mention that this belief was well founded, and the elder daughter of the Spaniard is now Mrs. Lawrence.

Bertie rapidly recovered from that terrible night. He told the story of his flight in a way that showed how deeply the risk he had run was impressed upon his memory. Santioff was the only man of the party

1. The first step in the process of the investigation is to determine the scope of the problem. This involves identifying the specific areas of concern and the potential causes of the problem.

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and stood out to sea. Don Pavo Floretta and his family accompanied the yacht in a small steamer of the launch type for a few miles, and then the last word of adieu was shouted, and handkerchiefs were waved, until distance reduced the *Daphne* to a spot on the ocean.

Homeward bound! What a depth of sweetness there is in the sound! Though the *Iris* had been left a heap of ashes on a distant shore, there was no melancholy thought on her account. She had done good service, and her end, if sad, was viewed in the light of an inevitable sacrifice. Wrecked, Lyon Lyster would rather she were completely destroyed, than existing with her timbers battered by every storm, until torn asunder and scattered hither and thither on the beach like the bones of some sea-monster.

"If we only had Sutter's gold," said Ralph one morning as they were nearing home, "some of it could be spent in replacing the *Iris* with another yacht."

"That is how my share of it is going to be spent," said Bertie; and they laughed good-humouredly at his boyish confidence.

"You will not return to the Californian shores for a year or two," said Carrie.

"I know where to look for the gold," said Bertie, with a knowing shake of the head; and they had another laugh at his expense. He seemed to enjoy

the jest as much as any of them did—perhaps a little more.

It was a joke all over the vessel, although none of the men ventured to let Bertie see how amused they were at his supposed idea of one day returning to dig up the lost treasure. But more than once he said in their hearing, "The men are to have a share of the money." It was all very amusing.

Sam Mutton's great hope was, as it had ever been, to become the possessor of a thriving sweet-stuff shop. That was his ambition ; and Bertie promised him one as a solace to his sufferings at the hands of Santioff, and compensation for the loss of his beach business, which, no doubt, had long been appropriated by some unscrupulous stranger.

Bertie was, in fact, very free in making promises ; and they were all very much obliged to him—for his good intentions at least—but the realizing of the promises was in their eyes a very remote matter indeed. They accepted the will for the deed, however, and were grateful.

One morning late in November, the lounging population of Little Crampton, taking advantage of an unwonted mildness in the weather, mooned about the harbour quays, talking over such matters as had a bearing on their lives, when a yacht appeared in the offing and bore down to the usual anchorage of that class of vessel when staying at the little seaport.

"She's uncommon like Mr. Brooking's *Daphne*," said one of the idlers.

"If it isn't the *Daphne*," remarked an old boatman, "it's her ghost."

It was the *Daphne*, of course; and the news spread like wildfire—the vanished yacht had returned.

There was an eager rush to meet the boat that brought the first party to land. Foremost was the ubiquitous reporter, who wanted to know all her story, and was ready to embellish it, if lacking in interest, according to his own taste and fancy.

"I can't talk to you now," was the reply given to him, as Lyon and Carrie hastened to secure apartments for a short stay.

Bertie, for some unaccountable reason, refused to come ashore.

"I want to talk to Ralph," he said.

Ralph was staying a while to arrange certain matters concerning the yacht with Gruff. He soon finished, and then at Bertie's request adjourned with him to the cabin.

"It's about the treasure, Ralph," said Bertie. "I want you to help me to get it, as a surprise to Lyon and Carrie."

"My dear boy," replied Ralph, "the treasure will keep. But you may tell me where it is."

"Here—on board the *Daphne*," said Bertie quietly; "you have brought it home AS BALLAST. It was Santioff's artful idea to carry it in that form, in

case he should meet in with as big a rascal as himself. Jorkins overheard him speaking of it to Towner Wickram. The pair concealed it in that way."

Ralph was astounded, but an early examination of the ballast of the yacht proved that a portion of it was the gold collected by Sutter the Swiss, hidden by that dead-and-gone adventurer, found after so many years by Santioff, and forfeited by him with his life as the penalty of his crimes.

"Why could he not have taken me into his confidence?" said Ralph. "I suppose it was because he, like all other knaves, always hesitated to trust honest men. For the fun of it I would have gone with him to find the gold, and been modest in claiming my share."

Bertie had the entire satisfaction of dumbfounding Carrie and Lyon, and the unalloyed pleasure of fulfilling all the promises he had made to the men. To him was the honour due. He had won the confidence and goodwill of Jorkins, without which the secret of the hiding-place of the treasure might have remained unknown for years, and then, perhaps, become the possession of those who were in no way entitled to it.

The story of the vanished yacht and its recovery is told. Of Guido Castella, who first gave an inkling of the way the yacht was gone, nothing was heard until

two years later, when Ralph, on a visit to London with his wife, *née* Carrie Lyster, met him begging in the streets. He spoke to the man, and asked why he had failed in his appointment.

"I was afraid, señor," he said; "that Santioff was a terrible fellow. To incur his anger was to court death."

A sufficient sum was given to Guido Castella to return to his own country and make a start in a modest way as a tiller of the ground, an occupation he had followed in his boyhood and youth.

It was about this time that Don Pavo Floretta paid his second visit to England to see his married daughters. Lyon had been married a year, and was living in Westmoreland, by the lakes. Bertie was then the young captain of the *Daphne*, which Ralph had given him; and Gruff filled the post of navigating officer loyally and well. But their voyages now are short—mere trips compared to that time when the *Daphne* was sought and found; for Bertie, having taken up the study of medicine, can only give a portion of his time to the sea.

Blower is happy in the position of a subordinate officer to the *Daphne*; and when he goes ashore at Little Crampton, he pays a visit to Sam Mutton, the highly respected "confectioner and sweet merchant" of High Street. In a little back room commanding a view of the shop they fight their battles and go through their adventures over again, adding a little

here and touching up there as time goes by, after the manner of men.

Of De Tereul's fate I can tell you nothing beyond what has been recorded. He may have perished miserably in the dungeon-like place in which, by a grim turn in the tide of events, he was incarcerated; or he may have escaped, and taken up with some calling in keeping with his early records. But, living or dead, he can in no way now affect the lives and prosperity of those who sought and found the

VANISHED YACHT.

THE END.



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